A Recipe for Success
Building a Citizen-Centric Website

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Background

Nearly two-thirds of the 351 Massachusetts communities have official websites. Only a handful of those were operating five years ago. All in all, not a bad record, considering the Internet has only been accessible for most people since 1995.

Those communities without websites usually have fewer than 2,500 residents. Often, smaller communities do not perceive a website as a valuable use of time and money.

For those municipal governments with websites, the challenge is to improve the quality of their site. A quality website is a useful website--one that contains information and services that visitors can find and use easily. Any plans to improve website quality should focus on these goals:

- Consisently post of time-sensitive information, such as meeting minutes, agendas, reports, bulletins, and notices.

- Add online services that reduce the time users spend transacting local government business.

- Structure site maintenance so the content is always current and continues to inspire user confidence.

- Increase the relevance of the website information to the target groups that use your website.

- Ensure that information is easy to find and services are easy to use; organize the content in ways that match user goals and point of view.

Municipal governments excel at adding information to their websites because they understand the importance of keeping sites current. Adding services (i.e., support for performing transactions and processes) is progressing more slowly, due to cost and complexity of implementation.

The other two quality goals remain a challenge:

1. Knowledge about information and service needs of target audiences and
2. Designing well-structured, easy-to-use websites.

This document, the Recipe for Success, is designed to help municipalities close the gap on the last two goals by emphasizing the citizen focus, which is paramount in any government activity. By following this recipe, municipal website builders can discover the intentions of users, and make those intentions the centerpiece of their website.

Why a Recipe?

These guidelines are referred to as a recipe to convey a sense of freedom within a framework. When you look in a cookbook for a pie recipe, you don't end up with lasagna. However, you might make apple pie or cherry pie.

A recipe guides the chef in preparing a meal, and the chef decides how much money and time to spend preparing the meal. What matters most is the chef's sure sense of how the food should taste--it's the goal that guides the process.

What You Should Know

Readers of this recipe, *Building a Citizen-Centric Website*, should be experienced in building and maintaining websites, and familiar with the organization and tasks of municipal governments. It is also assumed that the reader understands the advantages of having a municipal site and is not looking to be convinced. This is a guide to building a better website or for improving existing sites.

It is further assumed that the reader works, either in a paid or volunteer capacity, for some kind of local or regional municipal entity, such as a town, city, or county.

This is not a guide for building a first website. For basic help building a website, consult the last section of this guide, *Getting More Help*.

How This Recipe is Organized

The main sections of this recipe are:

- What is a Citizen-Centric Website?
- Recruiting a Website Project Team
- Phase I - Analysis: Content Inventory and Understanding User Goals and Intentions
- Phase II - Design: Architecture, Branding, and Prototyping
- Phase III - Development: Building and Testing the Website
- Phase IV - Deployment: Training, Publicity, and Maintenance
- Getting More Help
- Appendix A - Tools
- Appendix B - Sample Intention-based Navigation Schemes

Conventions Used in This Recipe

Each of the four major phases of website construction--analysis, design, development and deployment-- involves several tasks. We describe each task in the following manner:

- **Objective** - A short description of the outcome of this task.

- **Background** – Rationale for the task objectives and how the task adds to the total result.

- **Key Activities** - The recipe for completing this task.

- **Tools** - A list of software, sample forms, and other things that help complete the tasks. Forms are attached in Appendix A.

- **Best Practices and Lessons Learned** - A distillation of experiences and published case studies and guidelines.

In addition, this document uses several words in specific ways.

- Processes – Refers to the several steps it takes to accomplish a goal, such as getting a building permit.

- Transaction – A simple process involving the payment of a fee or tax..

- Website visitors or users – Synomyms for anyone who accesses the website.

What is a Citizen-Centric Website?

Definition

Citizen-Centric websites are also referred to as intentions-based, goal-based, user-focused, or task-based sites. These sites take as their starting point what the user wants to do online. They reflect the point of view and accommodate the general knowledge of their users. By way of contrast, the structure of most municipal sites follows the organization chart of the local government.

For example, if I need a dog license in Marlborough, the link is on the Home page. In contrast, on the Worcester site, I have to know where I will find the information. I can click City Services>Public Health>Animal Control>Frequently Asked Questions and then I find a link to the City Clerk's page on dog licensing.

The Home page of the Greenfield website helps illustrate this point. (Not to pick on Greenfield, most municipal websites follow the same structure.)

Organizational Chart Structure

Of the 27 main navigational links on the left side of the Home page, 24 are department names. The task links allow you to check the weather report, find directions to downtown parking lots, look up phone numbers, and view the events calendar.

The more you know about your local government, the more useful you'll find this website style. If you know which department handles the service or information you want, you're all set.

This website was organized from the point of view of town departments and employees. This is not surprising because the web designers tapped into the employees' knowledge to build the site. Approaching the design from the perspective of the website visitor is harder and takes more time. It requires knowing who visits the site and their intentions.

A citizen-centric site, such as Marlborough, presents a different experience for the user. The Home page contains links to the most commonly requested information and services. There are also links to announcements, public notices, calendars, and other main topics, such as the Mayor's Office and Ongoing Projects.

Citizen-Centric Structure

If what the visitors want is not obvious on the Home page, they have two options. First, they can begin by "assigning" themselves to (choosing) one of the three main user groups -- Residents, Businesses, and Newcomers. Once they've chosen a group, they see an expanded list of intentions, increasing the chances they'll find the one they want.

Second, they can use the traditional City Government directory button. This buton takes them to the familiar alphabetic list of departments and boards. The goal is to help as many people as possible find what they want as quickly as possible.

Pros and Cons of a Citizen-centric Site

As with most things in life, designing your citizen-centric website involves weighing your options:

On the pro side, visitors find information and services more quickly. Visiting your website is a positive experience, which reinforces the view that town employees know

what they are doing. Usability testing shows that citizen-centric websites are significantly easier to use, particularly for first-time or occasional visitors.

On the con side, these websites are harder to build. They take more time and thought to research and design; it takes longer to build one; and maintenance is more complicated because of the way information is interconnected. All this adds up to more time and expense in the building and upkeep.

Another factor to consider is your community's need for a better website. Ask yourself these questions:

- Is your municipality's population larger than 15,000 residents? This usually means the local government is rather large and complicated, making it cumbersome to search a traditional "org chart" site.

- Is your town hall open limited hours? Is the staff struggling to provide needed services?

- Are your residents and businesses demanding that more services and information be provided online?

- Is your community made up of a high percentage of people who work in high-tech businesses, have children, or have managerial or professional jobs? (These groups tend to have a high rate of Internet usage.)

- Is high-speed Internet access generally available in your community? Providing information and services online more quickly will attract larger numbers of users.

In addition to knowing your community, you must gauge your chances of successfully building and maintaining a citizen-centric website. Here are a few success factors to consider:

- Whether municipal employees are experienced computer and Internet users, or they are motivated to learn what is necessary to successfully develop and maintain a site.

- Whether top elected and appointed officials support a high-quality website and its ongoing maintenance.

- Whether someone on staff is dedicating part of his or her time to coordinating the website content management.

- Are you more likely to meet your website objectives with a citizen-centric website? If so, how much is it worth to you?

If a citizen-centric website seems the way to go, and if you are confident that municipal employees can assist in the building and successful maintenance of the site, the next step is estimating the cost. Talk to other communities that have citizen-centric sites; they can give you cost information for both building and maintenance (and any other factors to consider). Remember to include benefits that may not have direct savings, such as 24/7 availability of information and forms.

Once you have cost figures, you can talk to the decision-makers--elected and appointed officials--who control the budgets. They are the ones who determine if the cost/benefit ratio looks good.

Steps in building a Citizen-Centric website

Website development projects largely follow the same method or approach. Building a citizen-centric site involves assuring that the citizen point of view guides design and development.

A few words about the Project Team

Before Phase I (Analysis) we suggest you recruit a project team. You're probably thinking about this already. You may also be thinking, "Some teams are long on talk but short on action". However, there are many good reasons to form one. Here are a few for this project:

- Widespread support of the project is necessary to keep the website alive.

- Different people bring different perspectives to the project.

- Many hands make light work.

More details about building a project team in just a bit.

Website Project Phases

After organizing a team, a website project has four main phases: Analysis, Design, Development, and Deployment. The following sections break down the phases into their component tasks. Here are the tasks covered in the next sections:

I.   Analysis: Content Inventory and User Intentions

1. Inventory the content of your current website

2. Interview municipal employees

3. Conduct focus groups with citizens

4. Review "Best of Breed" websites

5. Review www.mass.gov

6. Define tasks within user profiles

II.   Design: Architecture, Branding, and Prototyping

1. Design the website architecture

2. Brand your website

3. Test a prototype of the website

III.   Development: Building and Testing the Website

1. Build the website

2. Test the website

3. Refine the design based on test results

IV.   Deployment: Training, Publicity, and Maintenance

1. Train staff

2. Publicize the website

3. Maintain the website

Recruiting a Website Project Team

Objective:

Recruiting a Website Project Team, with clear and defined roles and responsibilities.

Background:

Local governments use project teams all the time. For this project, follow all your best practices for building and managing effective teams. However, there are some differences in a website project team, including:

- Support for the project from the chief elected and appointed officials is crucial. The website is the municipality's very public face, and the chief officials are on the front line with the public. If they do not understand or support the website, funding dries up.

- Ideally, the project manager should be the person who'll continue as the web coordinator. That person is the institutional memory of the website.

- Here are some suggestions about the composition of the project team:

  - Have a small core team of 3-5 members.

  - Include a member of the public.

  - Each department should appoint a subject matter expert to help the core committee; this person should understand what citizens can do and want to do.

- Familiarity with website design and construction is not a requirement. Comfort with computers and a willingness to try new things are requirements.

Key Activities:

- Kick-off presentation with staff and elected and appointed officials.
  The main goal of the meeting is to help everyone understand how a quality website impacts each department and board.

- Review the current website and other municipal websites with internal audiences.

- Create a mechanism for ensuring a free-flow of questions and feedback. Solicit participant observations about what "works", what does not, and why. Develop a list of objectives for the site.

- Encourage departments to think about information, services, and frequently-asked questions (FAQs) that should be on the website.

- Establish a project roadmap (estimated time requirements, meetings schedule, data collection process, deliverables, etc.).

Tools:

Website Review Guide

Best Practices and Lessons Learned:

- Members of the Project Team need to schedule a meeting with each department to gather information, and develop task lists and process maps. Before the initial meeting, departments may choose to assign Subject Matter Experts and/or conduct additional online research on other municipal websites. Give departments enough time to develop ideas, questions and think about their most basic website requirements *before* this meeting. Emphasize that for this first phase it is more important to have some well-structured information and services online than none at all.

- The sooner each department begins to think about its area of the municipal website, the better. FAQs should correspond to today's common tasks and questions, with a special emphasis on how the website can address these needs.

- Some aspects of website design are highly subjective (colors, images, page position, font type). Don't spend too much time discussing them. A website's usefulness to the community is far more important than the background color.

Phase I - Analysis: Content Inventory and Understanding User Intentions

In the first phase of the project you analyze your current website content and organization in relationship to user intentions. Your goal is to identify what information and services are available online right now, and compare it to what your visitors want to find and do on your website.

Recognizing the gaps leads to other questions:

- Which gaps to fill?

- How?

- Where is the most benefit to the community and to the government?

- What can be done internally?

- Where might third-party assistance be valuable?

The question to ask each municipal employee and citizen is, "What would you like the website to do for you?" Answering this question is the fundamental approach to information gathering. You may need to stimulate citizen thinking with ideas about the possibilities. This is particularly important if their experience with task-based sites is limited.

Phase I Tasks:

- Inventory the content of your current website

- Interview municipal employees

- Conduct focus groups

- Review "Best of Breed" websites

- Review http://www.mass.gov

- Define intentions or develop task lists and map them to user profiles

Task: Inventory the content of your current website

Objective:

Document the information and services on the current municipal website.

Background:

A baseline description of the current site is needed to compare to the user intention information. Content inventories take time. It's not the most exciting work but it's necessary.

Key Activities:

1. Create a spreadsheet in Excel with the following column headers:

    ID: Number identifier of the page

    Title: Name of the web page, form, application, etc.

    Intended Audience: Who is this information or service for?

    URL: Address of web page (if one exists).

    File Format: What program created or can read the document (i.e., what is the file extension -- .html, Word, or .pdf?) This is important because all citizens should have equal access to the content posted online, and not be required to purchase or download costly software. In addition, citizens should not be able to easily modify documents they download from the site.

    Owner: Who is responsible for creating, maintaining, editing this content?

    Notes / Issues: Is this content redundant, dated, trivial or irrelevant? Is it appropriate for an Internet audience? Is the content is written clearly for typical users? If each department can make note of such issues now, the finished product will be that much better for the end-user.

    External Links: Does the department provide information or services by linking out to another website? If so, what are the URLs? Are the links stable and maintained? If not, it might be better to store the content locally.

2. Review all the pages of the website and document the contents in the spreadsheet. Below is an example of a completed inventory spreadsheet.

    Example: Inventory Spreadsheet:

ID	Title	Intended Audience	URL	File Format	Owner	Notes / Issues	External Links
1.1	Resident Services	Residents	http://www….	HTML	All	services homepage	
1.1.1	Household Hazardous Waste	Residents	http://www….	PDF	DPW		
1.1.2	Settling In	Newcomers		Word	DHSP		
1.1.2.1	Moving Van Permits	Newcomers, Residents		Word	Traffic		
1.1.2.2	Electric	Residents, Business	http://www….	HTML			www.nstaronline.com
1.1.2.3	Gas	Residents, Business	http://www….	HTML			www.nstaronline.com

Tools:

Content Inventory Spreadsheet

Best Practices and Lessons Learned

- Complete the inventories of website content systematically. Use spreadsheets--with clear guidelines--to make sure data is consistently collected and described for multiple websites or by different members of the project team..

- Use different sheets on the spreadsheet for different main topics. One large spreadsheet is unwieldy.

- Do not attempt to automate the inventory. Site mapping software is **not good enough**. Manual labor is the best method. Take heart, because the results are valuable, both to the project and to the person doing the inventory. He or she will be the resident expert of existing website content.

- The site map can help with the numbering scheme for the ID

Task: Interview municipal employees

Objective:

Document the information and services available in each department, and the most common reasons that someone calls or visits a department's office.

Background:

Compiling a full list of the services and information available in a department takes time and repeated questioning. It's a rare municipal department that has current, complete, written job descriptions, listing all staff responsibilities. There are several reasons for this:

- Experienced employees do their jobs from habit. They don't have written procedures and find it hard to remember all the steps--they just do the job!

- Many tasks are done only infrequently. A town clerk may have 75 tasks for which he or she is responsible, but may only perform 25 of them on a weekly basis.

- There is sometimes a fear that the better the website, the less the town needs employees. This fear may lead people to be passively uncooperative.

Key Activities:

1. Interview subject matter experts in each department about citizen goals, tasks, and information.

2. Interview a knowledgeable person representing each board and commission about citizen goals, tasks, and information.

3. Collect samples of all forms used by citizens that relate to the department.

4. List any reports or brochures produced regularly by the department that are of interest to citizens. For example, the yearly water quality report (Water Department) or Spring Recreation Brochure (Recreation Department)

Tools:

- Department Interview Form (Appendix VII)

- Boards and Committees Meeting Schedule (Appendix VII)

- List of Common Citizen Tasks & Department Content (Appendix VI)

Best Practices and Lessons Learned

- In the interviews, ask:

  - What are the three most common tasks citizens do that relate to your department?

  - What are the three most difficult citizen tasks?

  - What are the three most tedious tasks?

- Jog the memories of the employees you interview:

    - Show examples of the information and services available in the equivalent departments in other, similar-sized communities

    - Ask specific questions based on your knowledge of the tasks citizens do that relate to the department (or similar departments). For example, you might ask the Fire Department to describe exactly how a resident would obtain a burn permit or request inspection of a smoke detector.

- For complicated tasks, map the process (i.e., who does what, when, with what form,etc.). A good municipal website often changes business as usual. Some steps in the process may no longer be needed; new steps may need to be added. Question each step, and challenge & check your assumptions.

Task: Conduct focus groups

Objective:

Interview sample members of the major town constituency groups, such as Residents, Business, and Newcomers, to determine what they must accomplish with the municipal government.

Background:

Use focus groups before you build the website. Show them a few examples of websites you like, talk generally about your goals, give them your preliminary thoughts, and let the group react. You might hear only a few really important ideas, but they'll be critical. Hosting a focus group or two before designing a new website is generally less expensive than redesigning an incorrect or incomplete site.

Running focus groups is time-consuming. It involves planning, developing a presentation, recording feedback, analyzing the data, and drawing conclusions from that data. Ultimately, however, focus groups shed new light on citizen expectations.

Key Activities:

1. Classify your current and potential website visitors into 3-5 major constituencies. Most common are Residents, Businesses, Newcomers, Non-resident Taxpayers, and Tourists.

2. In groups of 5-7, run focus groups in each constituency. Try to use a cross section of your population.

Tools:

- Business Focus Group Questionnaire (Appendix VII)
- Citizen Focus Group Questionnaire (Appendix VII)

Best Practices and Lessons Learned

- If you have sizeable groups of recent immigrants living in your community, chances are their interest in and use of the Internet is greater than you suspect. Ask members of those communities what information and services they want on the municipal website. Their answers may surprise you.

- Expect to pay people for their time--at least in the form of refreshments during the session.

- How many people to interview is difficult to determine. "Some usability experts" suggest 20 well-chosen people in each category should give you 80 percent of the important feedback. In reality, your time and budget constraints will drive this number, more so than what is optimum for the task. For more information on usability testing, visit Jakob Nielsen's website: http://www.useit.com

Task: Review "Best of Breed" websites

Objective:

Review examples of excellent municipal websites, particularly those done by similar - sized communities.

Background:

There are thousands of municipal websites in the United States. Each is trying to serve its community with more and better services and information. Reviewing the more effective ones provides new ideas for the building of a better website in your community.

Key Activities:

1. Identify "best of breed" websites, particularly ones that are citizen-centric and close to your community in population.

2. Review the task structure.

3. Review the individual department contents.

4. Do informational interviews with the web coordinator at the sites you judge closest to the one you want to build.

Tools:

- Website review checklist (Appendix VII)

- Center for Digital Government's "Best of the Web" lists:
  http://www.centerdigitalgov.com/bestof/?loc=29

- Excellent Citizen-centric Massachusetts Websites:

   - Boston: http://www.cityofboston.gov/

   - Cambridge: http://www.cambridgema.gov/index.cfm

   - Marlborough: http://www.marlborough-ma.gov/Home/

   - Newton: http://www.ci.newton.ma.us/

   - Shrewsbury: http://www.shrewsbury-ma.gov/

   - Somerville: http://www.ci.somerville.ma.us/

   - Weymouth: http://www.weymouth.ma.us/

   - Tolland: http://tolland-ma.gov

Best Practices and Lessons Learned

- Don't reinvent the wheel. If you ask, other municipalities will usually share their ideas.

Task: Review www.mass.gov

Objective:

Review the Mass.gov website for an understanding of how user intentions are structured there, and, at the same time, look for possible links from your site to the Commonwealth's site.

Background:

The goal of this project is to create tools to help municipalities make their websites more congruent with the Mass.gov site. By congruent, we mean that the navigation scheme is similar, and appropriate links are made between the municipal and Commonwealth websites.

Key Activities:

1. Review the intentions or task structure on Mass.gov

2. Review the individual department contents on Mass.gov

3. Document links you want to add to your site.

Tools:

- www.mass.gov

- List of suggested links to www.mass.gov (Appendix VII)

- Breakdown of the Mass.gov Home page (Appendix VII)

Best Practices and Lessons Learned

- If you think a state agency has information or services to which you should link, and you're having trouble finding the specific web page on www.mass.gov, call the agency and ask.

- Identify the Mass.gov categories. Make changes only if it's clear your information doesn't fit well. Start with the presumption that you can use the general organization of the Mass.gov Home page. Try to fit your information into the format.

Task: Define tasks within user profiles

Objective:

Develop a set of user profiles describing typical members of the various user audiences and the tasks they would perform when visiting the website.

Background:

The Content Inventory spreadsheet included an Intended Audience classification that actually was your first step in defining user profiles. At this stage you need to take a step back and look at the data you have amassed. Where do you see citizen intentions?

1. The content explicitly requested by citizens, according to department representatives.

2. The content that departments provide to intended audiences.

3. The current paper documentation and associated services you reviewed.

4. The current website (if one exists) and associated information and services.

5. Notes, feedback, and questions from focus groups (if focus groups were conducted).

Key Activities

1. Compile a master list of all citizen intentions described, either implicitly or explicitly, in numbers 1-5 above.

2. Create user profiles by describing a persona for each Intended Audience member. Refine this list until it reflects the unique characteristics of typical members in your community.

Tools:

- Guide to Creating an Intentions List (Appendix VII)
- Guide to Creating User Profiles (Appendix VII)

Best Practices and Lessons Learned

Look at the Department Interview Forms for each department. When relevant links and other content are necessarily redundant or related between two departments, you have to ask, "What action taken by the citizen would cause this?" For example, if both the Traffic department and City Clerk provide parking ticket services, that is OK. *Department boundaries should not be barriers when thinking about intentions*.

Phase II - Design: Architecture, Branding, and Prototyping

You've finished the analysis of the content of your current site, other good municipal websites, and www.mass.gov. You've interviewed municipal employees and members of the major audiences for the website. Based on this information, you've identified key contexts, goals, and tasks. The various departments are now busy collecting forms and writing new content for their areas of the new website.

The next major step is to design a website to hold all this good content. Just like building a house, building a website requires a plan, sometimes called an architecture.

There are several types of architecture that need to be designed. All are important.

- Information Architecture: Types of information, how each type is represented or displayed, and the relationships among and between the various types of information and content areas (e.g. between Tasks required to get permits and Permit Requirements and Forms)

- Major Role Contexts: Categories of users such as Residents, Visitors, and Businesses. These roles or user profiles effectively serve as a filter to readily provide the relevant resources, information and task support to each user profile.

- Task Context and Task Architecture: Users may be building a house, disputing an assessment, etc. There are particular tasks citizens must do in a given context and these tasks must be mapped so they are "logical" from a user's perspective. User intentions or goals may be accomplished in more than one context and should be carefully mapped to accommodate diverse user points of view or entry points.

- Navigation Architecture: How do users get from one context to another? How do they locate items? Move among and between items? Will they always be in a single browser window or will the website allow users to open and work in multiple windows? What types of menus will be used?

- Web Page Architecture: Layout, location of items, page types, etc.

Phase II Tasks:

- Design the information architecture

  - Define the major task contexts (e.g., Building a Home, Paying Taxes) and the related goals, structure, and sequences that users need to perform in each context.

  - Structure your website, including layout and navigation.

- Brand your website to establish a consistent look and feel, graphical treatment, use of logos, color schema, and definition of fonts.

- Design and test a prototype of the website

Task: Design the information architecture

Objective:

Arrange the web pages so that, "visitors can do whatever they came to do with as little effort (and confusion) as possible."

Background:

The information architecture includes the

- Identification of various information types (e.g., Directories, Processes, Procedures, Forms, Rules, etc.)

Information must be designed and structured so it is

- Clear and easy to understand by the typical user

- Sufficient to achieve user objectives and layered to accommodate various levels of detail

- Consistent in style, tense, format and layout

Well-designed websites have well-designed information architecture. Just as you wouldn't build a house without a plan, you shouldn't build a complex website without an information architecture and a set of design or style guides.

Earlier, you learned about the citizen-centric site structure and navigation scheme. Now it is time for you to create your own.

You have already mapped user intentions to the major user contents and the information and services a citizen might seek. Now the "real estate" on each of your web pages must be allocated. The diagram below maps a possible Home page for citizen-centric website.
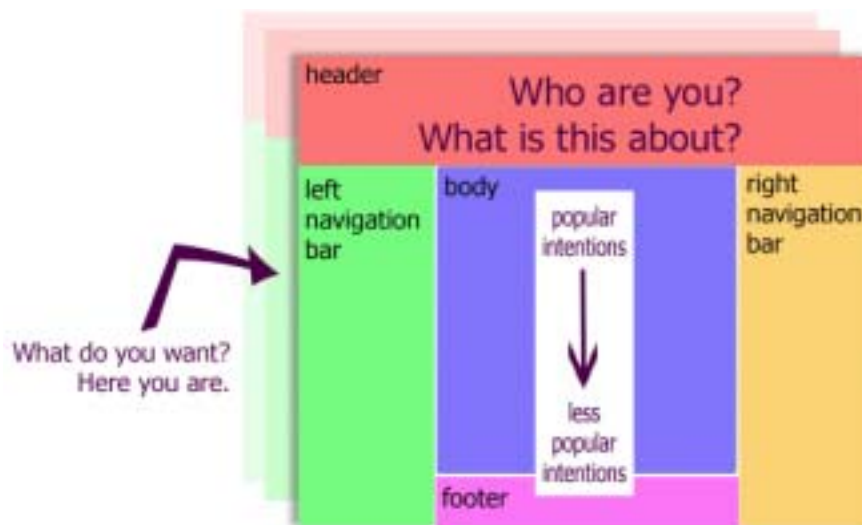
It is easiest (and a good usability practice) to divide web pages into sections (header, body) and place more popular tasks front and center. In information architecture terms, "Who are you…" (Levels 1-4) can only be interpreted as groupings of content and tools:

Top Level Constituences (TLCs):

TLCs correspond to Levels 0 and 1 in the site structure / navigation scheme you created in the Architecture Worksheet. Your TLCs should accommodate each of the user profiles. TLCs must visually guide the user to answer the question, "Who are you?" and in some cases, "What is this about?"

In the Marlborough project, five user types – Residents, Business, Newcomers, Visitors/Tourists and Non-Resident Taxpayers became three explicit TLCs (Residents, Businesses, Newcomers) and one implicit TLC (city employees). The TLCs were placed in the header as a *static* page element, meaning it existed on every page of the website:

Utilities:

A utility is a feature of your website not dissimilar to the introduction and appendices of a quality reference book. Utilities are navigational tools, such as a site map or a search feature. Utilities provide important visitor information such as the privacy policy, website disclaimer, and terms of use. A utility can be a lookup table or quick links or a page describing how the site was built, for whom, and why. A utility can be as simple as making sure the address, phone number, and Town Hall hours are at the bottom of every page.

There are many web page real estate best practices, and TLCs and Utilities are just two common conventions. Suffice it to say, if you build a citizen-centric information architecture, the links on each web page will mirror user intentions. The end result: intuitive site navigation.

Key Activities:

1. **Define the content and tools** that should appear at each Level (0-4).

2. **Define the Top Level Constituencies**.

3. **Standardize the page layout and navigation elements** to support your information architecture.

4. **Define your primary intentions**

   The top of the pyramid, per se – the TLCs, should be defined first as the primary way of routing traffic from your homepage to the rest of your site

More than four or five constituencies will tend to create confusion from a usability standpoint. As the most important navigational guide, keep your TLCs as simple as possible. At the same time, make sure to create paths to relevant content and task support for each user type and user profile.

5. **Define your sub intentions**. Help the visitor narrow their search. If the visitor has selected the Resident constituency, what part of resident life is the current concern? Parking and Transportation? Health Services? Licenses and Permits? Use Mass.Gov as a template for defining your initial subintentions, removing those that don't and adding those that do.

6. **Assign user functions**. Take the results of your department survey and collection of user functions and mark each one with the subintention that best fits it. Feel free to assign multiple subintentions to individual tasks. A resident is as likely as a business to request a water test, and both residents and visitors want to know about Shakespeare in the Park.

7. **Define your Utilities.** What kind of tools and information do you want to provide? A search feature? A site map? A privacy statement? Are there town or state requirements regarding disclaimers or equal opportunity statements?

8. **Provide access to navigation that maps to the Town organization chart**. If a user's entry point is a department, they should be able to get information related to that department (e.g. Town Clerk) as well as navigate to tasks related to that department (e.g. register to vote; obtain a dog license). In addition, users sometimes see things "logically" and it does not match to the organization chart. For example they may go to Animal Control to obtain a dog license instead of to the Town Clerk's office. Both entry points should be accommodated since most citizens aren't familiar with the detail of town structure and assigned responsibilities. A citizen-centric website will understand and accommodate common user points of view and not be tied to only one perspective.

   If visitors want to know who's on the planning board, or the phone number of the health inspector, or when the veteran's services office is open, they should be able to quickly access this information.

9. **Define key items / hot topics.** "Hot topics" can be any information that's interesting, important and/or timely. Such key items may include news and announcements, upcoming meetings, parking bans, snow emergencies, town hall and school closures, electronic copies of budget proposals or upcoming ballot items, or even employment opportunities with the Town. These should have their own visual space to which visitors can return periodically for fresh information.

Tools:

- Architecture Worksheet (Appendix VII)

- Examples of task-based navigation (Appendices I – V)

Best Practices and Lessons Learned

- Appendix B contains lists of intentions by department. Before starting from scratch, check this list for the ones that apply to your town. Using the 80/20 rule, most of the intentions you'll need can come from this list.

- Concentrate on developing tasks and intentions for the unique populations and live, work, or visit your community.

Task: Brand Your Website

Objective:

Create a pleasing, clear, readable, and consistent look to your website, which reflects the unique character of the community.

Background:

When you hear the term "branding", it's usually in reference to a commercial product or service. Branding is not a term normally associated with cities or towns. The pioneering advertising copywriter and ad agency founder David Ogilvy defined a brand as:

"The intangible sum of a product's attributes: its name, packaging, and price, its history, its reputation, and the way it's advertised. "

Substitute the word "community" for product, and delete the reference to price, and Mr. Ogilvy's definition works for towns as well as cars.

A town's reputation and history are relatively fixed in the public mind. The packaging and the way it's advertised are not fixed; they can be changed and improved. At the very least, the graphics and colors used for written communication should be consistent. You can carry this consistency through to the website.

Branding is expressed in a website by the colors, type style, logo or town seal, graphics along the top and bottom, and pictures.

Key Activities:

1. Analyze the written communications produced by the town for consistency.
    This includes letterhead, annual reports, business cards, and brochures.

2. Take photos of scenes immediately recognizable as being your town.

3. Informally poll residents about what they feel makes your community unique.
    Look for observations that you can translate into part of the website design.

Tools:

-   Existing town seal/logo

-   "Other" logos: police, fire, public works, etc.

-   Town colors

-   Unique geographical or architectural characteristics in the community.

Best Practices and Lessons Learned:

-   Too often we see individual departments creating logos, rather than using a single brand for the entire town. If you don't settle on a single brand, the users will get the impression that each department is autonomous. And you may actually end up spending more money than is appropriate to support somebody's ego.

-   If you do not have a distinctive logo or town seal, and your business cards are kind of drab, maybe now is the time to create your brand. While few towns can

afford to trash reams of stationery, the new brand can be phased in as reordering is necessary. Make sure that each department understands the strategy and reason for doing so. Make sure your printing contractors understand the intention of using one brand.

- For those departments with their own websites, now may be a good time to "bring them into the fold". Too many separate domain names (web addresses) are confusing to the public. While you may not be able to put each department into one physical city hall, you should consider having each virtual department under your one virtual city hall. This makes it easier for residents to navigate your site with a consistent design.

Task: Test a prototype of the website

Objective:

Validate the Home page design, the subsidiary page designs, and the navigation scheme.

Background:

Validation of your design means that people (other than the designers) review and approve of the website. The validation should be anchored in one question: What is the user's goal or intention and can a range of users achieve it quickly and consistently. When this occurs the website is viewed as easy to use, consistent in its look and feel, and atheistically pleasing. All three of these criteria are loaded with different meanings for different users, and are potential sources of endless debate. Below are some guidelines for validating a website design using these criteria.

1) Usability: Can the most popular pages be reached with one click? Are the button titles clear? Are there several ways to find information? Is there a good search function? Is there a site map?

2) Consistent look and feel: Anywhere they go on the website, visitors know they are still on your site. Graphics on the header and footer are consistent. Navigation is similar from page-to-page. The users are "oriented" and know where they are in the site. Visitors can return to the Home page from any page.

3) Aesthetically pleasing: This is difficult to define because personal tastes vary so much. Try to avoid a site design that polarizes your reviewers--some really hate it, some really love it. If possible, use colors, pictures, and graphics that reflect the character and/or history of the town. Keep the design uncluttered. Show the Home page design to many people to reduce the bias of one person or a small group.

Key Activities:

1. Build a prototype of the Home page.
2. Build a prototype of the subsidiary pages.

Tools:

Your chosen content management system.

Best Practices and Lessons Learned

- Keep the design uncomplicated. Avoid clutter and make use of white space. The surest way to confuse your visitors is to bombard them with too much information at once. Format content using indentation, bullets, etc. instead of huge blocks of undifferentiated text. Use headers and labels so people can locate content quickly.

- Consistency is key, but "sense of place" is important. Subsequent pages on your site should look similar to your home page, but not exactly like your home page. Consider a "tiered" system of design, with two or three compatible "looks" that visually indicate what type of Web page a resident is visiting.

- Avoid overwhelming navigation. Residents reading through the building permit application process should not be distracted by a visible list of links to every other page on your site. Anticipate where people will want to go from a given page and provide immediate and direct access.

- Use photos. While too many images distract from the information a visitor is seeking, too few images leave your site cold and impersonal. Consider a photograph for every department, either of a building or staff or a local landmark.

- Consider, however, the impact of photos, graphics and animation on those users without broadband or high speed internet connections. This is particularly true in rural areas – but many urban residents use dial-up connections. Be sure they images add value and are not placed "everywhere" just to achieve variety. Most users do not even "see" the images after the first visit unless the image provides additional information to the user in achieving their goal (e.g. a map of town hall offices).

- Choose and use your colors. Limit the number of colors and do not use intense colors such as red, bright green, etc. which "vibrate" and require lots of visual adjustments. Limit the number of colors in text. Don't try to use every color of the rainbow. Also, make sure the bulk of your page text is a dark color on a light color, such as black text on white. White text on a black background is very hard to read and looks unprofessional.

- If you have a basic design, either in font or color or layout, that you use and like on other town materials, such as letterhead or business cards, use it as a starting point for your website design.

- Make sure your design fits the information and services you have to deliver. There are design issues that may cause you to alter your information delivery but, by and large, design is secondary to service.

- There are some research-based design guidelines that support use of pale colors, upper and lower case and initial caps versus all capital letters, limiting bold fonts, and limiting if not prohibiting flashing text or graphics, moving objects, etc. `

Phase III - Development: Building and Testing the Website

Basic steps for building a website are not covered here. Refer to *Getting More Help*, the last section in this recipe, for a few of the many step-by-step instructions available. Plus, how you build the site depends somewhat on the software you use..

Having said that, the following sections describe some general principles for building and testing a citizen-centric website.

Tasks:

- Build the website
- Test the website

Task: Build the website

Objective:

Build a version of the website that contains all the major sections and is complete enough to test all the navigation.

Background:

In the previous phases, you collected and analyzed the content, and you did a prototype design of the website in order to test its navigation, look and feel, and usability

In this phase, you will build the website, recognizing that when you test it, you may discover a few things that change the design.

Key Activities:

1. Create PDFs of forms and large reports.
2. Collect and edit photographs to be used on the site.
3. Using your web page templates, create all the pages for the departments and boards.
4. Create the other information pages.
5. Create the Intention pages and link them appropriately.
6. Integrate all the pages into a functional prototype of the website.

Tools:

- Department Interview forms and Individual Board worksheets (Appendix VII)
- [Adobe Acrobat](#) (for making PDFs)
- Digital camera
- Adobe Photoshop Elements (for editing photos)
- Content management system
- Website listing aids for writing for the web: http://www.useit.com/papers/webwriting/
- "Yale" Web Style Guide: http://www.webstyleguide.com/index.html

Best Practices and Lessons Learned

- The most time-consuming task of the project is collecting information from the departments. Some departments are interested in the website, understand their customers needs, and have clear ideas about what should be in their section of the site. These departments are the exceptions. Expect delays. Be prepared to use pressure, of some kind, to gain cooperation.

- If you have limited success in obtaining information from a department, consider cutting and pasting content from other town websites you admire and asking your department experts to react or "edit" it. Sometimes experts are anxious about where to start and find it easier and quicker to work with a draft".

- Don't delay the whole project because of a few lagging departments. If the site is 80 percent complete, go live. It's already better than your current site.

- Writing for the web is different than writing a text document. Consult some of the guidelines from the various style guides we've mentioned before you start writing. Following a few basic rules improves your website 100 percent.

- Take pictures of the people who work in Town Hall. It personalizes the site.

- Be sure to optimize pictures and graphics for the web. Big files load slowly and drive away visitors.

- If document files are large, and there is no way to make them smaller or break up the document, put the file size and type on the web page so users can determine whether to download it given their connection speed and time available.

Task: Test the website

Objective:

Test the website to find broken links, missing information, and navigation that looked good in the prototype but does not work well in the full site.

Background:

Some good ideas on a prototype do not scale up. On a full site, a navigation scheme, for instance, may be too cumbersome.

This is also the time to check the site against your paper design. For example, did you include all the intentions you identified?

Key Activities:

1. Starting with the Home page, check all the links on the Intentions area, the rest of the Home page, and any common areas.

2. Have each department check the links on their sections.

3. Do a spell check.

4. Have subject matter experts carefully review their sections. They may see intentions whose titles are unclear, or notice missing information.

5. Have a few members of the public test the site. They might find one or two "gotchas" you've overlooked.

Tools:

- Testing Instructions (Appendix VII)

- Website validation tools (here is website with a good list): http://www.webreference.com/authoring/languages/html/validation.html

Best Practices and Lessons Learned

- Follow generally accepted best practices for testing websites, such as not having the designer check his/her own work.

- Broken links or missing information in the intention area is very common. Check them closely.

Phase IV - Deployment: Training, Publicity, and Maintenance

The good news is you've built the best website in the Commonwealth. Remember, however, that this is just a good start. Unlike some commercial websites, you have to update it every day. And, you have to do what the commercial sites do best—promote the website. Without constant maintenance, the site becomes useless. Without promotion, not enough people know what you have done. Training is essential for both maintenance and publicity.

Task:

- Train staff

- Publicize the website

- Maintain the website

Task: Train Staff

Objectives:

- Train selected staff to update the website.

- Train all staff to use the website effectively and to promote it.

Background:

Which staff you train to maintain the website depends on the development tools you use and your approach to control of the content. At one extreme, the tool is easy to use and each department controls their own content. A web coordinator supervises the common areas of the site and provides technical assistance. At the other extreme, an outside consultant builds and maintains the site in HTML. Departments send content they want posted on the site to the consultant. Towns use every variation in between the extremes.

Promotion, however, should be everyone's job. Your staff needs to be familiar with the site, and understand how it affects their work. Everyone needs to think "Website!" when they create new information, and take every chance to promote the site to their customers.

Key Activities:

1. Make a plan for ongoing maintenance.

2. Train staff to use the maintenance procedures.

3. Make a plan for promotion.

4. Train staff to help implement the promotion plan.

Tools:

- Training Checklist (specific to your content management process and software)

Best Practices and Lessons Learned

- Interest in the website starts at the top. If the chief elected and appointed officials show little interest in the site, eventually the staff understands it is not really a priority.

- Having an active municipal website makes a difference. The staff need to learn how it affects the public and their jobs. Don't assume they already know all that.

- Make sure the website is everyone's Home page on their web browser.

- Don't put information on the website unless you have a plan for updating it.

- Create a schedule for reviewing the site for outdated or incorrect information.

- Each person should have a card next to the phone that lists the content of their section of the website. When the public calls, and the information is on the website, they can easily say, "I'll be happy to give you that information but did you know it is also available on our website?"

Task: Publicize the website

Objective:

Within the first year, your goal should be having the equivalent of 25 percent of your residents use the website every month.

Note: Counting website visitors is tricky business. The 25 percent figure should address unique visitors, which means each one is counted on the first visit but not counted on subsequent visits. Those other visits should be tracked in another category, called something like Visitor Sessions. Check the manual of the website tracking software you use.

Background:

Your target number of visitors may vary but you must set goals if you want to judge the effectiveness of your publicity. According to the most recent survey by the Pew Internet and American Life Project, 77% of adults visited government websites in 2003. How many people use your site is a function of the quality of the site and effort you put toward promotion.

Key Activities:

1. Add the website address to all letterhead, business cards, annual reports, bills, and brochures.

2. Advertise on the local cable access station.

3. Include announcements in your regular mailings, like water bills.

4. Make sure the correct link for your official website is on the Commonwealth Communities page on Mass.gov, and the Massachusetts Municipal Association website (www.mma.org)

5. Ask that the websites of the surrounding communities link to your website.

6. Train staff to remind the public that information and services are available online.

7. Ask the newspapers to write stories about the site, and include the website address whenever they do any municipal story.

8. Include text on the Home page to attract search engines

Tools:

- Publicity Kit (Appendix VIII)
- Sample Home page text (Appendix VII)

Best Practices and Lessons Learned

- Tape the website address to everyone's telephone. It's amazing how many municipal employees don't know their own site's URL.

- A few words about search engines:

    - Don't spend a lot of time and money improving your search engine results. Search engines play a minor role in helping visitors find your site. Most

people see the site address on some publicity piece, link from another website, or guess it.

- Having said that, an easy way to improve search engine results is to ensure your Home page has a few paragraphs containing the keywords: town name (or city name) official website. Other good keywords are: government, Selectmen, meeting minutes, agendas, tax rates, licenses, boards, committees, Town Meeting, departments. Include words pertaining to important information and services visitors can get from your website.

- Four search engines--Google, Yahoo, MSN, and AOL--do 90% of the business. Don't worry about the others.

- As municipal websites standardize on the .gov address, people will use search engines less and less to find your site.

- Use the .gov as your primary domain. (Eventually, all towns will do this and there will no longer be questions about your website URL.)

- Put the website URL on the side of your fire engines and other town vehicles.

- Make sure teachers and librarians know about the town website. School children do most of their research on the Internet.

- Every time you make a major change to the website, invite the local papers to write a story about it.

- Ask staff to use the website when providing public documents (assuming they are on the web). This reinforces the use of the website by staff and any document you send out has the URL on the page.

Task: Maintain the website

Objectives:

- Keep the website up-to-date.

- Keep improving the website.

Background:

Municipal websites, more than commercial sites, quickly go out of date. Every day, municipal staff create minutes, agendas, reports, and calendar entries, all of which you should post to the website. This is true of any quality municipal website.

On a citizen-centric website you have another maintenance task: Updating the task lists. These tasks are the centerpiece of the site and require regular review. When you build the site, you make your best estimate of the most popular intentions. Over time, you may discover you weren't 100% correct, and/or visitors may develop new intentions. If departments discover they are still receiving numerous calls and visits for routine information, the intentions should be updated.

Remember: Your goal is to enable as many people as possible to access the information they need from either the Home or one of the top level intention pages.

A third maintenance issue is usability. No one has designed the perfect municipal website. We are all striving to improve the usability of our sites. Usability questions include: Do people find the navigation intuitive? Are the headings easy to understand? Do you have appropriate links to Commonwealth services and information? Can visitors easily complete tasks because all the information they need is on the site? Do you have the updated forms linked to the site?

Key Activities:

- Departments continue to look for patterns by tracking phone calls and walk-in visits.

- Occasionally do a focus group with a sample of website users. You are looking for feedback on ease-of-use and completeness of the website.

- Start looking for new online services to add to the site. Ask the public what they want.

- Frequently check the links on the intentions. It is easy to break one and not immediately know it.

- Review the monthly activity reports. Which pages and downloads are most popular? Can you reach them from the Home page?

Tools:

- Call Log (Appendix VII)

- Focus Group Questionnaires (Appendix VII)

- Monthly website activity report

Best Practices and Lessons Learned

- A website is never finished. You can always improve it.

- Every six months, keep a call log for a week. Look for information you should have on your website.

- Visit websites of large cities, such as Boston and New York, to get ideas.

- Review the Mass.gov website every six months. Look for new links and services to include on your website.

Getting More Help

Numerous books, articles, and organizations stand ready to help you with your municipal website. We have not covered the basics because you have other resources on which to draw. The following information is a just a few of our favorites.

Organizations (and their websites)

- Center for Technology in Government (SUNY-Albany)
  http://www.ctg.albany.edu/

  The **Center for Technology in Government** works with government to develop information strategies that foster innovation and enhance the quality and coordination of public services.

- Pew Internet and American Life Project
  http://www.pewinternet.org/index.asp

  The Pew Internet and American Life Project produces original, academic-quality reports that explore the impact of the Internet on families, communities, work and home, daily life, education, health care, and civic and political life.

- Public Technology, Inc.
  http://www.pti.org/

  The non-profit technology organization for all cities and counties in the United States. The National League of Cities, the National Association of Counties, and the International City/County Management Association, three primary local government associations, provide PTI with its policy direction, while a select group of city and county members conduct applied research and technology transfer functions.

Books and Articles

- *Untangle the Web: Delivering Municipal Service Through the Internet*
  Center for Technology in Government (SUNY-Albany)
  http://www.ctg.albany.edu/publications/guides/untangle_the_web

- *The Rise of the E-Citizen:How People Use Government Agencies' Web Sites*
  Pew Internet and American Life Project
  http://www.pewinternet.org/report_display.asp?r=57

- *Information Architecture for the World Wide Web*
  Louis Rosenfeld and Peter Morville
  Published by O'Reilly and Associates, Inc.

- *Designing Web Usability*
  Jakob Nielsen
  Published by New Riders

- *(Yale) Web Style Guide*
  http://www.webstyleguide.com/index.html?/

Appendices

Appendix I - Intentions-Based Navigation: Residents

Appendix II - Intentions-Based Navigation: Businesses

Appendix III - Intentions-Based Navigation: Newcomers

Appendix IV - Intentions-Based Navigation: Visitors/Tourists

Appendix V - Intentions-Based Navigation: Non-Resident Taxpayers

Appendix VI – Common Citizen Tasks / Department Content

Appendix VII - Tools

Appendix I - Intentions-Based Navigation: Residents

1.1   Family & Housing

    1.1.1   Family

        1.1.1.1   Adoption & Foster Care

        1.1.1.2   Cash, Health and Other Assistance Programs

        1.1.1.3   Birth/Death/Marriage Certificates

        1.1.1.4   Getting Married or Sharing a Household

        1.1.1.5   Divorce or Annulment

        1.1.1.6   Child Custody & Support

        1.1.1.7   Child Care

        1.1.1.8   Handling Death

        1.1.1.9   Domestic Violence & Abuse

        1.1.1.10   Food and Nutrition

    1.1.2   Public Works

        1.1.2.1   Trash & Recycling

        1.1.2.2   Snow & Ice Removal

    1.1.3   Housing

        1.1.3.1   Special Assistance Programs

        1.1.3.2   Homebuyer Assistance

        1.1.3.3   First Time Homebuyer

        1.1.3.4   Affordable Housing

        1.1.3.5   Zoning Ordinances

        1.1.3.6   Home Improvement

    1.1.4   Bills & Utilities

        1.1.4.1   Local Utilities

        1.1.4.2   Paying Bills & Taxes

        1.1.4.3   Water & Sewer Bills

1.2   Public Health Information

    1.2.1   Health

        1.2.1.1   Health Care Providers

        1.2.1.2   Paying for Health Care

        1.2.1.3   Research and Statistics

        1.2.1.4   Protection & Patient rights

        1.2.1.5   Specialized Health Needs

        1.2.1.6   Shellfish Harvesting Closures

1.2.2   Emergency Preparedness

1.2.2.1 Emergency Management

1.2.2.2 Power Outages

1.2.2.3 Winter Storms

1.2.2.4 Terrorism Alerts

1.3   Schools & Education

1.3.1   Local Schools

1.3.1.1 Local Public Schools

1.3.1.2 Local Private Schools

1.3.1.3 Colleges, Universities, Technical Schools

1.3.1.4 School Department/School Board

1.3.1.5 Parent/Teacher Organizations

1.3.2   Education Resources

1.3.2.1 Financial Aid

1.3.2.2 Links For Parents

1.3.2.3 Demographics

1.3.2.4 Daycare/Child Care

1.3.2.5 Home Schooling Information

1.4   Cars & Transportation

1.4.1   Registration & Insurance

1.4.1.1 Registering with the City/Town

1.4.1.2 Registering with the State

1.4.1.3 Insurance & Repair

1.4.1.4 Massachusetts Lemon Laws

1.4.1.5 Vehicle Excise Tax

1.4.2   Parking

1.4.2.1 Towing of Parked Vehicles

1.4.2.2 Parking FAQs

1.4.2.3 Paying Parking Tickets

1.4.2.4 Winter Parking Bans

1.4.3   Mass Transportation

1.4.3.1 Bus Schedules

1.4.3.2 MBTA/Trains

1.4.3.3 Transportation for Seniors

1.5   Labor & Employment

1.5.1   Employment Resources

1.5.1.1   Employment Opportunities with the City/Town

1.5.1.2   Job Search and Career Advice

1.5.1.3   Unemployment Benefits

1.5.1.4   Job Training

1.5.1.5   Job Descriptions

1.5.1.6   Benefits

1.5.2   Employment Issues

1.5.2.1   Better Business Bureau

1.5.2.2   How to File a Complaint Against your Employer

1.5.2.3   Worker's Compensation

1.6   Permits & Licenses

1.6.1   Home Improvement

1.6.1.1   Homeowner Forms, Permits & Special Instructions

1.6.1.2   Building Permit FAQs

1.6.1.3   Contractor Complaint Form

1.6.1.4   Zoning Ordinances

1.6.1.5   Contractor License Search

1.6.2   Home & Family

1.6.2.1   Marriage License

1.6.2.2   Hunting License

1.6.2.3   Fishing License

1.6.2.4   Dog License

1.6.2.5   Voter Registration

1.6.3   Other Permits

1.6.3.1   Burning Permit

1.6.3.2   Permit to Yard Sale

1.6.3.3   Mooring Permits

1.6.3.4   Clam Digging Licenses

1.6.3.5   Beach Permits

1.6.3.6   Transfer Station Permits

1.7   Disabilities

1.7.1   Disability Services

1.7.1.1   General Information & Services

1.7.1.2   Disability Rights

1.7.1.3   Discrimination

1.7.1.4   Equipment & Technology

1.7.1.5   Housing

Appendix II - Intentions-Based Navigation: Businesses

2.1   Doing Business in "Our Town/City"

    2.1.1   Doing Business

        2.1.1.1   Search UCC, Corporations and business name database

        2.1.1.2   Purchasing Bids

        2.1.1.3   Codes/Ordinances

        2.1.1.4   Inspectional Services

        2.1.1.5   Historic Districts

        2.1.1.6   Register your business

        2.1.1.7   Register for Bid Notification

2.2   Business & Economic Development

    2.2.1   Resources

        2.2.1.1   Chamber of Commerce

        2.2.1.2   Business Assistance

        2.2.1.3   Getting Started – Step-by-step

        2.2.1.4   Financing Resources

        2.2.1.5   Certify as minority- or woman-owned enterprise

        2.2.1.6   Employment Programs

        2.2.1.7   Job Placement and Referral Programs

2.3   Licenses & Permits

    2.3.1   Permits

        2.3.1.1   Building Permits

        2.3.1.2   Inspection FAQs

    2.3.2   Licenses

        2.3.2.1   License Commission

        2.3.2.2   Liquor Licenses

        2.3.2.3   Business License

2.4   Commercial Regulations

    2.4.1   Regulations

        2.4.1.1   Subdivision Rules and Regulations

        2.4.1.2   Zoning Ordinances

        2.4.1.3   Inspectional Services

        2.4.1.4   Maintenance of Grounds

Appendix III - Intentions-Based Navigation: Newcomers

3.1   City/Town Information

     3.1.1   About Our City/Town

          3.1.1.1   History of Our City/Town

          3.1.1.2   Library Services

          3.1.1.3   Community Calendar

          3.1.1.4   Office of Tourism

          3.1.1.5   Municipal Parks

          3.1.1.6   Municipal Beaches

          3.1.1.7   Clamming Information

          3.1.1.8   Mooring Information

3.2   Recreation & Entertainment

     3.2.1   Things to Do

          3.2.1.1   Recreation Programs

          3.2.1.2   Recreation Calendar

          3.2.1.3   Recreation Notices

          3.2.1.4   Facilities

     3.2.2   Places to Go

          3.2.2.1   Seasonal Festivals

          3.2.2.2   Municipal Parks

          3.2.2.3   Municipal Beaches

          3.2.2.4   Golf Courses

          3.2.2.5   Amusement Parks

          3.2.2.6   Walking/Biking Trails

          3.2.2.7   Charter Boats/Cruises

          3.2.2.8   Museums/Galleries

3.3   Schools & Education

     3.3.1   Local Schools

          3.3.1.1   Local Public Schools

          3.3.1.2   Local Private Schools

          3.3.1.3   Colleges, Universities, Technical Schools

          3.3.1.4   School Department/School Board

          3.3.1.5   Demographics

          3.3.1.6   Daycare/Child Care

3.4   Lodging & Transportation

3.4.1   Lodging

      3.4.1.1   Chamber of Commerce

      3.4.1.2   Places to Stay

3.4.2   Transportation

      3.4.2.1   Bus/Train Schedules

      3.4.2.2   Charter Services

      3.4.2.3   Taxi Services

      3.4.2.4   Maps - Getting Around Town

      3.4.2.5   Airports

      3.4.2.6   Amtrak, Intercity Rail

3.5   Health & Public Safety

3.5.1   Health

      3.5.1.1   Local Hospitals

      3.5.1.2   Research & Statistics

      3.5.1.3   Specialized Health Needs

3.5.2   Public Safety

      3.5.2.1   Fire Department

      3.5.2.2   Police Department

      3.5.2.3   Emergency Management

3.6   Getting Involved with Our City/Town

3.6.1   Volunteer Opportunities

      3.6.1.1   Local Organizations

      3.6.1.2   Volunteer for a Board/Commission/Committee

      3.6.1.3   Become a Coach

      3.6.1.4   Local Churches

Appendix IV - Intentions-Based Navigation: Visitors/Tourists

4.1   City/Town Information

      4.1.1   About Our City/Town

            4.1.1.1   History of Our City/Town

            4.1.1.2   Library Services

            4.1.1.3   Community Calendar

            4.1.1.4   Office of Tourism

            4.1.1.5   Municipal Parks

            4.1.1.6   Municipal Beaches

4.2   Recreation & Entertainment

      4.2.1   Things to Do

            4.2.1.1   Seasonal Events

            4.2.1.2   Recreation Calendar

            4.2.1.3   Recreation Notices

            4.2.1.4   Facilities

      4.2.2   Places to Go

            4.2.2.1   Seasonal Festivals

            4.2.2.2   Municipal Parks

            4.2.2.3   Municipal Beaches

            4.2.2.4   Golf Courses

            4.2.2.5   Amusement Parks

            4.2.2.6   Walking/Biking Trails

            4.2.2.7   Charter Boats/Cruises

            4.2.2.8   Museums/Galleries

4.3   Lodging & Transportation

      4.3.1   Lodging

            4.3.1.1   Chamber of Commerce

            4.3.1.2   Places to Stay

      4.3.2   Transportation

            4.3.2.1   Bus/Train Schedules

            4.3.2.2   Charter Services

            4.3.2.3   Taxi Services

            4.3.2.4   Maps - Getting Around Town

            4.3.2.5   Airports

            4.3.2.6   Amtrak, Intercity Rail

Appendix V - Intentions-Based Navigation: Non-Resident Taxpayers

5.1   Info For Non-Resident Taxpayers

      5.1.1   Non-Resident Taxpayer Services

            5.1.1.1   Non-Resident Taxpayer Association

            5.1.1.2   Registration

            5.1.1.3   Notices and Bulletins

            5.1.1.4   Current Projects

            5.1.1.5   Reports / Position Papers

            5.1.1.6   Frequently Asked Questions

      5.1.2   Paying Bills

            5.1.1.1   Frequently Asked Questions

            5.1.1.2   The Collector's Office

            5.1.1.3   Water & Sewer Bills

            5.1.1.4   Pay Real Estate Bills Online

            5.1.1.5   Excise Tax Bills

Appendix VI – Common Citizen Tasks / Department Content

This appendix is organized by department though it focuses on the website visitor's intentions or the tasks they want to perform. Organizing the information by department makes it easier to see where you need to put it on the website.

City/Town Council or Board of Selectmen

Contact info & hours

Mission Statement (description):

Frequently Asked Questions:

What does the Council/Board do?

How are they elected?

What are the requirements?

Can I speak to a Councilor or the City Council?

Are they responsible for tax rates?

Are they responsible for the budget?

Other Content:

Council rules

News & Announcements

Council agendas & minutes

Citizen comments

Request for agenda item

Relevant Links:

Mayor's Office

City Clerk's office

Finance Office

Personnel Office

Keywords:

city council, functions, elections, requirements, communications, taxes, city budget, labor day, parade news, announcements, agendas, minutes

Mayor's Office

Contact info & hours

Mission Statement (description):

Frequently Asked Questions:

Referrals to other departments

Speaking requests

Fee Schedules

Other Content:

Parade information - private donor information

News & Announcements

Constable application processing

Licensing

Other application processing

Relevant Links:

City/Town Council pages

City/Town Clerk pages

City/Town charter

Keywords:

mayor, constable, application, license, parade, amusement

City Clerk

Contact info & hours

Mission Statement (description):

Frequently Asked Questions:

Vital Statistics

Voter Registration

Deeds

License / permitting questions (marriage, death, birth certificates)

Business Incorporation

Filing a claim

Running for office form?

What Don't/Do related to: pool tables, fuel storage, constable applications

How to conduct a petition

Fee Schedule:

dog, marriage, birth licensing;

business licenses/certificates

Other Content:

Census information	Election Information
Precinct Information	How to register to vote
City Code	City Ordinances
City By-laws	Election Results
Decriminalization Procedures	Home Occupation Information
Freedom of Information	Dog License
Marriage License	Birth Certificate
Death Certificate	Fish/Game License
Transfer Station sticker	Absentee Ballet Application
Tax filing certification	Business certificate
Business Discontinuance	Location Change
Minutes/Agendas	Deceased
Auction permits	Request for vital information
Constable Application	Filing a claim

Relevant Links:

City Council information - agenda, minutes, records

Massrmv.com

Traffic Commission

Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA)

Handicapped Parking - Police

Fish / Game License information - mass.gov/masswildlife

Applicable Local, State and Federal Statutes

Keywords:

vital statistics, births, deaths, marriages, vote, voter registration, deeds, incorporate, business, file, claim, run for office, petition, dog, licensing, licenses, certificates, census, elections, election results, precincts, code, ordinance, by-laws, violation, home occupation, freedom of information

Human Services

Contact info & hours

Mission Statement (description)

Frequently Asked Questions

Other Content:

Housing Needs	Substance Abuse
Homelessness	Teen Pregnancy
Literacy	Unemployment
Evictions	Emergency Food
Emergency Clothing	Disability Issues
Child Care Needs	Spousal Abuse
Adolescent Issues	Family Crisis
Welfare Issues	Information and Referral
Community Awareness	Advocacy
Program Development	Crisis Intervention
Fund Raising	Salvation Army form
Relief Fund application	

Relevant Links:

School Department

Local Hospitals

Religious Leaders

State Governmental Agencies

Non-Profit Organizations

Boys & Girls Club

Council on Aging

Commission on Disabilities

Police and Fire Departments

Board of Health

Veteran's Organizations

Community Services

Keywords:

Housing Needs, Substance Abuse, Homelessness, Teen Pregnancy, Literacy, Unemployment, Evictions, Emergency Food, Emergency Clothing, Disability Issues, Child Care Needs, Spousal Abuse, Adolescent Issues, Family Crisis, Welfare Issues

Retirement

Mission Statement (description):

Contact info & hours

Frequently Asked Questions

Other Content:

Teacher's Retirement information

Fund performance - balance sheet

Refund information

Plan Description

Accounting policies

Beneficiary form

Change of Address

Direct Deposit Authorization form

Relevant Links:

Benefits Guides - state site

Personnel

PERAC - state site

Massachusetts Public Employee Retirement Guide

Guide to Disability for Public Employees

Guide to Survivor Benefits for Public Employees

Retirees' Rights and Benefits

Refund links - state site

Change of Beneficiary form - state site

Keywords:

retirement, teacher, fund, refund, beneficiary, retirement, change, address, direct deposit

Building Department

Contact info & hours

Mission Statement (description)

Frequently Asked Questions:

Can I do the work myself?

Is my permit ready?

How do I ____?

Do I need a permit for…? (deck, shed, roof, remodeling?)

When is a permit needed?

Planning a subdivision?

Home occupation information (what constitutes home occupation?)

Homeowner's contractor form license, definition of contractor

Filing a complaint

Zoning questions (department doesn't apply to in-laws, unobstructed access rule)

Non-contractor complaints

Signs not under Zoning

Permits before inspections

No health or liquor permits

Historic/scenic stone wall addition/removal

Other Content:

Fence regulations	Public Shade Tree Law
Sign Ordinance	Site Plan Application "package"
Subdivision rules	Setbacks for variance zones (table)
Christmas tree ordinance	Variance from sign ordinance
Regulations for handicap signage	Condominium conversion regulations
Blasting guidelines	Plumbing Code
Energy conservation code (state code)	Requirements for issuance of a permit
Zoning interpretation	Filing a Complaint
Home Occupation Information	Swimming pool permit application
Building Permit Application	Certificate of inspections (780 CMR- 106.5)
Plumbing Permit (state)	Gas Permit (state)
Site Plan	Wood Stove Permit

Demolition PermitControlled   Construction Affidavit

Homeowners License exemption form   Electrical Permit (state)

Schedule an Inspection   Certificate of compliance

Modular building permit   Fence Permit Application and ordinance

Building card, Field card   Solid Fuel Appliance Permit

Energy Conservation Application form   Consumer Information Form

Backflow prevention device design data sheet

Construction Supervisor License Complaint

Board of Health - Debris Removal Manifestation

Projecting Sign Bond & Insurance   Scenic Roads Act application

Application for Sign Appeal / Variance   Application for Permit to erect or alter signs

Application for Registration as a Home Improvement Contractor or Subcontractor

Relevant Links:

Attorney General's office

Police E-911 test procedures

Board of Health - Septic Permit, Debris Removal Manifestation

City Code/Zoning Ordinances - City Clerk

State Building Code

Road Close Permit - DPW

Conservation Commissions - Wetland Issues

Planning Board - scenic road distinction

DPW - "tree warden" for Public Shade Tree Law

DPW - stone walls and trees in public domain

Mass.gov (gas, plumbing, electrical forms)

Fire department - blasting guidelines

F.W. Dodge and McCormick reporting agencies

Planning Board - sign variance

Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA)

Applicable Local, State and Federal Statutes

Keywords:

do it yourself, permit requirements, subdivision, home occupation, contractor, license, complaint, file, zoning questions, non-contractor complaints, home inspections, health, liquor permits, stone walls, fees, fence, fences, shade tree law, sign ordinance, site plan application, variance zones, Christmas tree, handicap signage, condo, condominium conversion, blasting, plumbing, code, backflow, energy conservation, swimming pool, demolition, controlled construction, architect, work compensation affidavit, etc. etc.

Library

Contact info & hours

Mission Statement (description)

Frequently Asked Questions:

Services offered online?

Library application form

Fee Schedule:

fines, copies

Other Content:

Library Services

Organizations & Clubs

Events

Privacy policy

Online Card Catalog

Relevant Links:

Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners - www.mlin.org

Friends of the library

Parents' council

Magazine & Reference databases

Museum pass program

Children's Department

Keywords:

library, application, fines, copies, privacy policy, Library Foundation, loaned items, notary public, card catalog, books

Assessors

Contact info & hours

Mission Statement (description)

Frequently Asked Questions:

How did you come up with my value?

Why did my taxes go up?

How come I didn't get a tax bill?

Why isn't my name on the tax bill?

Excise tax issues

Fee Schedule:

Other Content:

Glossary of Assessment terminology	Excise tax regulations
Municipal Assessment process	Clause Exemption Information
Registry of Deeds	How vehicles are valued
To all concerned taxpayer	New Homeowner information
Exemption form	Abatement form
Excise Tax Abatement form	Statutory exemption
Property Tax Deferral - Mass.gov	Blind Person form (state)
Abatement of Property Tax	Field Cards for real estate agents
Affidavit for Applications for Clause Exemptions	Online Parcel Data

Relevant Links:

Mass.gov - Property Tax Deferral

Building Department and ZBA - Zoning information

Online Parcel Data

Planning & Engineering - GIS with parcel changes

Massrmv website

Keywords:

home value, taxes, tax, increase, bill, excise, assessment terminology, regulations, exemption, abatement, clause 41C, Mass Code, registry of deeds, vehicle valuation, new homeowner, property tax deferral, parcel changes, Registry of Motor Vehicles, veteran, surviving spouse, senior citizen, blind person, real estate agent, field card

Historical Commission

Contact info & hours

Mission Statement (description)

Frequently Asked Questions:

> Hours of operation
>
> Dates of incorporation
>
> Early settlers
>
> Early businesses

Fee Schedule:

> Photocopy fees

Other Content:

> Historic structures
>
> Historic geography
>
> Photos
>
> Artifacts

Relevant Links:

> Local Historical Society
>
> Massachusetts Historical Society
>
> Other genealogical links

Department of Public Works

Contact info & hours

Mission Statement (description)

Frequently Asked Questions:

Household hazardous waste

Recycling

Snow

Do I have a scenic road / stone wall near me?

Fee Schedule:

application fees, water / sewer user rates, cemetery

Other Content:

Description of Divisions	Annual water report
Recycling rules and regulations	Water / sewer rules & regulations
Snow facts - winter tips	Requirements for snow plow drivers
Cemetery - rules & regulations Forestry,	Parks description, inventory
Street opening requirements	Regulations for obtaining permits
Massachusetts General Laws	Send Comments to DPW
Application to bid on work contracts	Application for Adopted Space
Existing signage request	Road opening permit
Application for Contractor licensing	Site Plan / As Built Site Plan
Planning Board technical review	House / Building Numbering
Public Shade Tree removal	Line Clearance Trimming permit
Cemetery Lot Sales / Internment	Water / Sewer flow tests
Hydrant Use permit	Water meter installation
Sewer connection permit	

Relevant Links:

File a claim - legal office - use City Clerk form

Garden Club - adopted space flower buckets

Engineering Division permit database

Planning Board

Traffic Commission - Police, Fire City Clerk

MA Department of Environment Protection

Transfer Station

Applicable Local, State and Federal Statutes

Keywords:

household hazardous waste, recycle, recycling, snow, scenic road, stone wall, water, sewer rates, DPW, Department of Public Works, divisions, annual water report, snow plow, cemetery, rules, regulations, rates, genealogy, forestry, parks, street opening, permits, licenses, requirements, public shade tree, traffic light, pot hole, brush clearing, work contracts, adopt space, adopted, existing signage, contractor licensing, site plan, planning board, technical review, House, Building, Numbering, Line Clearance Trimming, Cemetery Lot Sales, Internment, flow tests, Hydrant Use, Sewer connection

Police Department

Contact info & hours

Mission Statement (description)

Frequently Asked Questions:

Firearms information

Permit requests

Wanted persons

Safety information

Accident reports

Fee Schedule

Other Content:

Sex offender registry - level 3	Noise variance information
Abuse prevention orders	Auction permit
Handicap Parking permit	Sunday or Holiday Work permit
Solicitor's License	License to Carry Firearms
Firearms Identification Card	Street Closing permit
Block Party permit	Constable application review
State Hawker & Peddler permit	Letter of Clearance application
Vehicle Identification Number verification	Citizen comment form - traffic problems
RMV accident reports - state form	File a Complaint form
Personal criminal record request form	Drug Tips form - anonymous
Application for alarm permit	Request for Sex Offender Information form

Relevant Links:

massrmv.com

School resource officers

Board of Health - drug tips

Traffic Board

Fire Department, Emergency Management

Keywords:

firearms, permits, wanted persons, safety, accident, reports, sex offender, registry, noise variance, Abuse prevention, orders, Auction, permit, Handicap. Parking, Sunday, Holiday Work, Solicitor's License, Carry Firearms, Firearms Identification Card, Street Closing permit, Permit, Temporary Traffic Regulations, Block Party, Constable application, State Hawker & Peddler, Letter of Clearance, Vehicle Identification Number, VIN, traffic problems, RMV, accident, reports, File a Complaint, Public records, personal criminal record, Drug Tips, alarm, Sex Offender

Fire Department

Contact info & hours

Mission Statement (description)

Frequently Asked Questions:

Burner (propane) installation

Commercial inspections

Fee Schedule:

permit plan review

Other Content:

Burn permitting information	Fire prevention information
Building Plan Review Requirements	Burn permits
Family home sales inspections	Blasting permit
Explosives permit	Compressed Natural Gas permit
Cutting and Welding permit	Dust Explosion Prevention permit
Fire Protection Equipment permit	Flammable Liquid Storage permit
Liquid Propane Gas Storage and Use permit	Oil Burning Equipment Installation permit
Combustible Material Storage permit	Tar Kettles on Roofs permit
Transportation of Combustible Liquids permit	Tire Plants and Tire Storage permit
License Application - Flammable Liquid Storage	Development permit

Relevant Links:

Emergency Management

Police Department

Building Department - permitting, extinguishers, smoke detectors, alarms

Keywords:

propane, burner, commercial inspection, permit plan review, burn, fire prevention, building plan, home sales, inspections, blasting, Explosives, Compressed Natural Gas, Cutting and Welding, Dust Explosion Prevention, Fire Protection Equipment, Flammable Liquid Storage, Liquid Propane Gas Storage, Oil Burning Equipment, Combustible Material Storage, Tar Kettles, Roofs, Tire Plants, Tire Storage, Transportation, Combustible Liquids, License, Flammable Liquid,

Collector

Contact info & hours

Mission Statement (description)

Frequently Asked Questions:

How can I pay my tax bill?

Does the collector set the tax rate?

Where can I pay my motor vehicle excise tax?

Where do I pay personal property taxes?

Does the collector issue tax bills?

Where can I pay my utility bills?

Where can I pay my water/sewer bill?

Where can I pay for trash pickup?

Are online payments accepted for any bill payments?

Where do I pay parking tickets?

How do I contest a parking ticket?

Other Content:

Online bill & tax payments

Relevant Links:

Online payment queries

MassRMV

Property Assessments

Current mill rate

Utility rate structure

Sewer/water rate structure

Parking Clerk

Personnel

Contact info & hours

Mission Statement (description)

Frequently Asked Questions:

Do you have Police/Fire exam?

Are there jobs available?

Do I need a civil service exam?

Other Content:

Job postings

Job descriptions

Health care, dental information

Investment plan information

Life insurance information

Civil service exam schedule / information

Application for labor position

Resume submission

Online Job Application

Online claim forms (benefits provider)

Relevant Links:

Benefits providers

HRD Development - civil service job listings

state exams - police, fire…

Keywords:

police, fire, exam, jobs, job postings, descriptions, health care, dental investment plan, life insurance, civil service, exam schedule, application, labor, resume, submit

Recreation

Contact info & hours

Mission Statement (description)

Frequently Asked Questions:

What programs are available?

Calls for Outside Sports

When are games scheduled/cancelled?

How do I register?

Reservations

Fee Schedule:

Program schedule with fees

Other Content:

Public Beach & Wading Pools information	Holiday Activity information
Athletics program information	Summer concert series information
Park Information - reservation process, regulations	Registration forms (adult & youth)
Sports Program registration form	Field permit applications

Relevant Links:

Youth Council

Youth Commission

Sponsor links

Community youth sports organizations

Keywords:

sports, schedules, cancellations, registration, programs, reservations, public beach, wading pools, holiday activity, , archery, summer concert, series, movies, park, yoga, Pilates, beach, fields, wheels, hip-hop, dancing, horseback, riding, tennis, park, rules, regulations, reservations

Housing Department

Contact info & hours

Mission Statement (description)

Frequently Asked Questions:

Eligibility criteria

Age requirement

Rentals available

Housing Assistance

Renovation Assistance

Other Content:

State-aided Chapter 667 Elderly/Handicapped Housing Program information

Elderly waiting list information

Eligibility criteria

Available housing / apartment listings

3rd party managed housing information

Assistance Programs

Renovation Programs

Elderly waiting list application

Section 8 housing voucher

Rent collection

Relevant Links:

Chapter 689 special needs housing outside agency

State rental voucher program

HUD, state

Keywords:

housing, eligibility, age, requirement, rentals, assistance, renovations, housing program, elderly, waiting list, application, section 8, rent collection

Board of Health

Contact info & hours

Mission Statement (description)

Frequently Asked Questions:

Food born illness (link to state) Housing sanitary code

animal control   Mercury thermometer exchange

West Nile / mosquito control   Free area medical services

Tenant / Landlord rights   Food establishment questions

Immunization Clinics   Tuberculosis prevention - BCG and PPD

Syringe exchange

Other Content:

Health regulations - state & city code   Tobacco regulations - retail environment

General information for Food establishment   License Board - rules & regulations

Applicable Local, State and Federal Statutes Tuberculosis - FAQs, testing

After immunization shots, FAQs, acetaminophen Websites You Should Know About

Adult Immunization Documents   Communicable and other infectious Pediatricians,

Family Health, Hospitals   Guidelines for Tuberculosis Testing

Abrasive Blasting permit   Food Service permit

Funeral Directors permit   Installer permit

Septic System permit   Massage Establishments permit

Therapist permit   Mobile Food permit

Tobacco permit   Day Camps permit

Beaver Control permit Pools (public/semi-public) permit

Rubbish Removal permit   Sewage Trans. Permit

Tanning permit   Mobile Homes permit

Wells permit   Temp. Food Permit

Burial permit   Body Piercing permit

Skating Rink Inspections permit   Complaint form

Application for license to conduct a recreational camp for children

Bakeries permit   Catering permit

New/Renovated Establishment review of plans Frozen Dessert permit

Percolation test/Deep Hole Observation pit Milk permit

Parental / Legal Guardian Immunization Permission form (Portuguese, Spanish)

Latent Tuberculosis Infection reporting form Refrigerator / Freezer temperature log Vaccine Unit
Vaccine Storage Incident Report

Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System   Vaccine Order form

Varicella Vaccine Order form   Hepatitis A Vaccine Order form

Relevant Links:

Massachusetts Department of Public Health - Medical provider education links

www.immunize.org

www.cdc.gov

www.fda.gov/fdac/features/095_vacc.html

www.health.gov/healthypeople

www.hrsa.dhhs.gov/bhpr/vicp

www.niaid.nih.gov/publications/vaccine/safervacc.htm

www.fda.gov/cber/vaers/vaers.htm

www.parentingresources.ncjrs.org

www.aap.org

www.vaccinesafety.edu

www.state.ma.us/dph

www.nfid.org

www.immunizationinfo.org

www.idsociety.org

www.vaccines.org

www.childrensvaccine.org/homepage.htm

VISs in Other Languages (Vaccine Information Statements)

Bioterrorism Websites: www.bt.cdc.gov and www.state.ma.us/dph

Keywords:

food born illness, housing sanitary code, animal control, Mercury thermometer exchange, West Nile Virus, mosquito control, Free medical services, Tenant, Landlord rights, Food establishment, Immunization Clinics, Syringe exchange, Health regulations, state, city code, Tobacco, retail, License Board, Statutes, Adult Immunization, Communicable, infectious disease, Pediatricians, Family Health, Hospitals, Tuberculosis Testing, Abrasive Blasting, Food Service, Funeral Directors, Installer, Septic System, Massage Establishments, Therapist, Mobile Food, Tobacco, Day Camps, Beaver Control, Pools, Rubbish Removal, Sewage Transfer, Tanning, Mobile Homes, Wells, Temporary Food, Burial, Body Piercing, Skating Rink Inspections, Complaint form Bakeries, Catering, Renovated Establishment Frozen Dessert, Milk, Percolation test, Deep Hole Observation pit inspection, Parental, Legal Guardian Immunization, Latent Tuberculosis Infection, LTBI, Vaccine, Storage Incident Report, Varicella, Hepatitis A,

Parking Clerk

Contact info & hours

Mission Statement (description)

Frequently Asked Questions:

Why was my car towed? What do I do now?

How can I appeal my parking ticket?

Why was my car booted? What do I do now?

Fee Schedule:

Parking fees

Other Content:

Parking rules & regulations

Parking appeals form (ticket #)

Pay ticket online

Download appeals forms

Relevant Links:

City Code, Town Charter

Keywords:

parking, towing, boot, union, contracts, appeals, ticket,

Purchasing

Contact info & hours

Mission Statement (description)

Frequently Asked Questions:

Vendor/purchasing requirements

Who do I talk to about bids, RFPs, payments, etc?

What RFPs are available? Addenda to RFPs?

Contractor/Vendors - current bids, deadlines, plan locations, Dodge report

Bid limits for contractors

Legal advice

Zoning questions

Other Content:

Union Contracts information

Parking appeals form (ticket #)

Request to Purchase or Abandon Property

File Claim Against Municipality - thru Clerk

State form for architects (state site)

Relevant Links:

ADA Commission

Building Department

Clerk - file a claim against municipality

Mass.gov - architects form

Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA)

Clerk - Code, ordinances

DPW

Keywords:

city ordinance, contractors, vendors, bids, deadlines, plan locations, dodge, bid limits, contractors, legal, zoning, union, contracts, parking, appeals, purchase, abandon, property, claim, file, architects, form

Planning Board

Contact info & hours

Mission Statement (description)

Frequently Asked Questions:

Status of Plans - project status reports

General project overview

Development data book

Availability of incentives - TIF program

Fee Schedule:

Other Content:

Master plan report	Neighborhood plan report
Downtown plan report	Monthly project report
Community Development information	Appeal process
Chapter 40B buyer rules	Form "A" permit
Special permit - Open Space subdivision	Form "B" (Preliminary Subdivision plan)
Form "C" (Definitive Subdivision plan) Qualifications application	
Online permitting	

Relevant Links:

Clerk - zoning bylaws

Business development - state program

Code

Zoning Ordinance

Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act

Massachusetts Building Code

MEPA

Mass Highway Department curb cut approvals

Keywords:

plans, status reports, building, application, permits, development, data, TIF program, master plan, neighborhood, downtown, monthly, project report, Community Development, funding sources, housing rehabilitation, get lead out, downtown façade, signs, Community Action Plan, appeal, process, Chapter 40B, Form A, open space, subdivision, preliminary, definitive, qualifications,

Council on Aging

Contact info & hours

Mission Statement (description)

Frequently Asked Questions:

Transportation programs

What programs are available? Cost?

Lunch programs?

Do you have Meals on Wheels?

Other Content:

Wellness Clinic program

Fitness activities

Outreach programs

Calendar of Events

Volunteer opportunities form

Transportation Schedules/Requests

Relevant Links:

Benefits checkup

bilingual link

www.aarp.org

Keywords:

Councils on Aging, senior, programs, lunch, programs, meals, transportation, Wellness, clinic, fitness, outreach, calendar, events, volunteer

Zoning Board of Appeals

Contact info & hours

Mission Statement (description)

Frequently Asked Questions:

What are the setback requirements?

What are variances?

How do I get a variance?

Fee Schedule:

Zoning Board application form

Other Content:

Application for Hearing & Legal Notice information

"The Variance Puzzle" information

Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40A, Section 10

Applicable Local, State and Federal Statutes

Application for Hearing & Legal Notice

Billing of Legal Notices

Variance permits

Comprehensive permits

Special permits and appeals from a person aggrieved from the terms of the Zoning Bylaws

Relevant Links:

Clerk - Zoning bylaws

Building Department - proposals reviewed by Building Dept.

Registry of Deeds

GIS - Parcel Maps

Keywords:

building, setbacks, requirements, variances, zoning, fee schedule, hearing, legal, notice, application, billing, legal notices, comprehensive, special, permits

Public Facilities

Contact info & hours

Mission Statement (description)

Frequently Asked Questions:

Maintenance request forms

Liquor not served in rented school rooms

Fee Schedule:

non-profit & profit

Other Content:

Standard Lease form

Building Use form

Maintenance request forms (carpenters, custodians, electricians, HVAC)

Relevant Links:

Public Building information

School room information

Keywords:

maintenance, forms, standard, building, lessee, carpenters, custodians, electricians, HVAC

Emergency Management

Contact info & hours

Mission Statement (description)

Frequently Asked Questions:

Hazardous waste collection

Other Content:

Mass Care Shelters - locations, contact information

Reverse 911 - description, requirements

Public information related to: Civil Disturbances (rioting), earthquakes, flooding, hurricanes,

dam failure, radiological plume pathways, terrorism, tornados, weapons-related incidents,

winter storms or hazardous materials (HAZMAT)

Nature, location, and time of emergency/disaster

Immediate actions that should be taken by the public

Agencies involved in response and scope of their involvement

Telephone numbers where the public can receive answers to specific questions

Disaster kit, emergency preparedness plans

Subscribable emergency notifications

Hazardous waste collection - "e-call"

Relevant Links:

American Red Cross	Police, Fire Department, State Police, FBI
DPW	Department of Homeland Security
Agency for Toxic Substances & Disease Registry	Center For Disease Control
Computer Aided Management	Chemical Emergency Preparedness Program
Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation & Liability Act of 198- (PL 96-510)	
Code of Federal Regulations	Chemical Transportation Emergency Center
Chemical Hazards Response Information System	Chemical Manufacturers Association
Centralized Medical Dispatch Center	Clean Water Act
Decontamination	Department of Environmental Protection
U.S. Department of Defense	U.S. Department of Energy
U.S. Department of Transportation	Department of Public Health
Emergency Broadcast System	Extremely Hazardous Substance
Emergency Management Agency	Emergency Management Institute
Emergency Operation Center	Emergency Operations Plan

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency   Federal Aviation Administration

Emergency Planning   Community Right-to-Know Act

Federal Emergency Management Agency   Federal Water Pollution Control Act

Geographical Information System   Hazardous Materials

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services   Hazardous Materials Emergency Plan

HAZMAT Response Team   Incident Commander

Incident Command System   Integrated Emergency Management System

Joint Information Center   Local Emergency Planning Committee

Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency   Material Safety Data Sheet

National Agricultural Chemicals Association   National Contingency Plan

National Chemical Response & Information Center   National Emergency Training Center

National Fire Academy   National Fire Protection Association

National Institute of Occupational Safety   National Response Team

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration   On Scene Coordinator

National Response Center   Nuclear Regulatory Commission

Hazardous Materials Emergency Planning Guide

Criteria for Review of Hazardous Materials Emergency Plans

Oil and Hazardous Materials Technical Assistance Data System

Public Information Officer   Reportable Quantities

Regional Response Team (State or Federal)   Self Contained Breathing Apparatus

Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986 (PL 99-499)

State Emergency Response CommissionAll-hazard Emergency Operations Planning

Standard Operating Procedure   Threshold Planning Quantity

U.S. Coast Guard (DOT)   U.S. Department of Agriculture

U.S. Geological Survey

Keywords:

hazardous waste, collection, shelter, locations, reverse 911, Civil Disturbances, rioting, earthquakes, flooding, hurricanes, dam failure, radiological plume pathways, terrorism, tornados, weapons, winter storms, hazardous materials , HAZMAT, emergency, disaster, disaster kit

Finance (Auditor & Treasurer)

Contact info & hours

Mission Statement (description)

Frequently Asked Questions:

How do I get a bill?

When do water bills go out?

Why is my usage so high?

How do I get meter tested?

Fee Schedule:

rates for water / sewer usage - with DPW

Other Content:

current budget

proposed budget

Water / Sewer billing information

Relevant Links:

DPW

City Council - budget vote

Library - copies of budget

Water Department

Sewer Department

Keywords:

water, bill, meter, test, sewer, usage, city, budget

Conservation Commission

Contact info & hours

Mission Statement (description)

Frequently Asked Questions:

Wetlands Protection Act

When do I need to file?

Fee Schedule:

Other Content:

Conservation areas - history, description, directions, natural features, regulations

Conservation regulations - Wetlands setback policy

Applicable Local, State and Federal Statutes

Advertisement requirements

Appeal process

Board members and responsibilities

GIS - Wetlands maps

Board Agendas & Minutes

DEP forms (state)

Wetland forms (state)

Abutter Notification forms (state)

Determinations of Applicability permit

Order of Conditions permit

Relevant Links:

Department of Environmental Protection

www.state.ma.us/dep/appkits/forms.html

Site Plan Review

Keywords:

wetlands protection act, conservation areas, regulations, DEP, Department of
Environmental Protection, wetland, forms, abutter notifications, applicability,
conditions, permit

Other Boards & Commission

Depending on the municipality there may be additional volunteer/appointed boards and commissions that serve in advisory positions to the elected board. Below is an outline of information that may be important content to include depending on the municipality, its geography and cultural make up.

Contact info & hours

Mission Statement (description)

Frequently Asked Questions:

Fee Schedule:

Other Content:

Relevant Links:

Keywords:

Appendix VII - Tools

- Website Review Guide
- Content Inventory spreadsheet
- Department Interview Form
- Boards and Committees Meeting Schedule
- Business Focus Group Questionnaire
- Citizen Focus Group Questionnaire
- List of suggested links to www.mass.gov
- Breakdown of the Mass.gov Home page
- Guide to Creating an Intentions List
- Guide to Creating User Profiles
- Architecture Worksheet
- Testing Instructions
- Publicity Kit
- Sample Home page text
- Call Log

Tool - Website Review Guide

On each website, start on the homepage and ask the audience:

- What is your 1st impression of this homepage?

- Can you clearly read and understand the text on the page?

- If you clicked on xyz link or graphic, what do you expect to be on the subsequent page?

- Select a common user intention such as "Locate the contact information for Building Department" to demonstrate on each website. As depicted in the following screen shot, note how the header, left navigation bar and other web page elements assist the user in finding this information:

Town of Barnstable, MA Homepage (http://www.town.barnstable.ma.us)

MUNICIPAL WEBSITE EVALUATION FORM

Municipality: _____

web site Address: _____

Rank all characteristics on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being poor and 5 being superior.

| | **Score (out of 5)** | |
	Evaluator 1	*Evaluator 2*
1. Content - web site contains the following:		
Meeting information		
Budget information		
Services		
Contact information		
Feedback/email capability		
"How-to" information		
Relevant links		
Search capability		
2. Architecture		
Site well organized		
Separated thematically (i.e. Business, residents, tourists)		
Number of links to find specific information		
Persistent navigation		

**3.
Layout**

Graphics and text easily
readable

Page layout tested on 3 different
browsers

_____

Browser
1:

_____

Browser
2:

_____

Overall design of
page

_____

**4. All graphics, links and buttons work or load
properly**

_____

5. Frequency of updates

_____

**6. webmaster - someone is responsible
for site**

_____

**7. Registration with search engines and
browsers**

Ability to find site on Yahoo! (Municipal gov't:
NY)

Ability to find site by searching key
words

_____

Search Engine 1:

_____

Search Engine 2:

_____

TOTAL   _____

(max.
110)

Evaluation form created by the Community Benchmarks Program, Maxwell School of
Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University.

Content Inventory Worksheet

ID	Title	Intended Audience	URL	File Format	Owner	Notes/Issues	External Link

Tool - Department Interview Form:

Department:	Date:
Contact Person:	
Telephone:	

Mission Statement (description):	*What services does this department provide? What is the department's goal? What other departments provide related services?*
Contact info & hours:	*Personnel, phone numbers (extensions), email, address*
Frequently Asked Questions:	*Most common questions received today* *Anticipated questions from website visitors*
Fee Schedule? Yes/No	
Other Content:	*Department-specific forms, permits, applications, information and services*
Relevant Links:	*What other departments, state services, third parties are related to this department's services and information?*
Keywords:	*What words would a website visitor plug into a search engine to find content related to this department?*

Tool - BOARDS & COMMITTEES MEETING SCHEDULE

Name of Board / Committee / Commission	Regular meeting schedule	Meeting time	Meeting location	Minutes (Y/N)	Agenda (Y/N)

Tool - Business Focus Group Questionnaire:

1. Age: 18-25___ 26-35___ 36-45___ 46-55___ 56-65___ 66 and over___

2. Gender: Male___ Female___

3. Do you live in (*your city/town name*)? Yes___ No___

4. Position (i.e., owner, partner, president) _____

5. Type of business: Retail___ Service___ Manufacturing___ Agricultural___ Food & Lodging___ Construction___ Other_____

6. Number of employees: 1-5___ 6-10___ 11-25___ 26-50___ 51-100___ 101-200___ 200-500___ Over 500___

7. How long have you been doing business in (city/town name)? 1 year or less___ 1-5 years___ 6-10 years ___ 11-20 years___ Over 20 years___

8. Does your business have Internet access? Yes___ No___

    a. If yes, Dial-up___ DSL___ Cable___

    b. If yes, How long? 1 year or less___ 1-2 years___ 2-5 years___ 5 years or over___

    c. If yes, Do you and your employees have company email? Yes___ No___

    d. If no, Do you plan to in the future? Yes___ No___

9. Does your business have a website? Yes___ No___

    a. If yes, Does your site (check all that apply):

    Market your product or service___

    Sell your product or service___

    Support your product or service___

Tool - Citizen Focus Group Questionnaire:

1. Age: 18-25___   26-35___   36-45___   46-55___   56-65___   66 and over___

2. Gender: Male___ Female___

3. Occupation: _____

4. Do you have children in (*city/town name*) schools? Yes___ No___

5. How long have you lived in (*city/town name*)? 1 year or less___ 1-5 years___ 6-10 years ___ 11-20 years___ Over 20 years___

6. Do you have Internet access? Yes___ No___

   a. If yes, Dial-up___ DSL___ Cable___

   b. If yes, How long? 1 year or less___ 1-2 years___ 2-5 years___ 5 years or over___

   c. If yes, Do you and your employees have company email? Yes___ No___

   d. If yes, Have you purchased any items online in the past 6 months? Yes___ No___

   e. If yes, Have you done any research (travel, genealogy, consumer, etc.) online in the past 6 months? Yes___ No___

   f. If no, Do you plan to in the future? Yes___ No___

Tool - Suggested Links to the Mass.gov Website

eGovernment Services

Motor Vehicles online services

http://www.mass.gov/rmv//express/

Educator's License

http://www.doe.mass.edu/educators/e_license.html

Birth, Death and Marriage Certificates

http://www.mass.gov/dph/bhsre/rvr/vrcopies.htm

Pay moving violations fines

http://www.mass.gov/rmv//express/

Civil Service Exams

http://www.mass.gov/hrd/csintro.htm

Apply for Child Support Services

https://ecse.cse.state.ma.us/ECSE/Home/RequestServicesApp/index.asp

Lookup Licensed Construction Supervisor Search

http://www.mass.gov/bbrs/cslsearch.htm

Home Improvement Contractor Lookup

http://www.mass.gov/bbrs/Hicsearch.htm

File State Income Taxes

http://www.dor.state.ma.us/options/options.htm#5

File a Consumer Complaint

http://www.mass.gov/consumer/form.htm

Find a Licensed Foster Care Provider

http://www.qualitychildcare.org/adoption_search_fc.asp

Search School Profiles

http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/

EMT Continuing Education Credits Search

http://db.state.ma.us/dph/oems/default.asp

Daily Air Quality Reports

http://www.mass.gov/portal/index.jsp?pageID=mg2utilities&L=1&sid=massgov2&U=airquality_ozone

Demographics by City

http://maps.massgis.state.ma.us/censustown/pages/main.jsp

Find Maps of Mass

http://www.mass.gov/portal/index.jsp?pageID=mg2terminal&L=1&L0=Home&sid=massgov2&b=terminal
content&f=maps&csid=massgov2

Other links through the state website

Open a Fast Lane account

http://www.masspike.com/fastlane/

Transportation

http://commerce.mbta.com/

File New Hire Reports

https://secure.cse.state.ma.us/newhire/login/login.asp

Recreational Licenses

https://www.sport.state.ma.us/internet/index.html

Sign up for do not call list

https://www.madonotcall.govconnect.com/Welcome.asp

Investigate Career Alternatives

http://www.detma.org/Masscis.htm

Workforce forecasts and publications

http://www.detma.org/fplmiforms1.htm

Community Buildout Maps

http://commpres.env.state.ma.us/content/buildout.asp

Community Preservation Tools and Techniques

http://commpres.env.state.ma.us/content/cptools.asp

Check a professional's license

http://license.reg.state.ma.us/pubLic/licque.asp?color=blue

Find Election and Voting information

http://www.wheredoivotema.com/bal/myelectioninfo.php

Compare Banks and Credit Unions

http://db.state.ma.us/dob/banksmain2.asp?refer=massgov

Find Free and Low Cost Legal Aid

http://www.lawlib.state.ma.us/findlawyer.html

Search Massachusetts Law

http://www.mass.gov/legis/laws/mgl/mgllink.htm

Sex Offenders in your Community

http://db.state.ma.us/sorb/htmldataentry.asp

Report a Pothole

http://www.mass.gov/mhd/potholeForm.htm

Search Doctor's Profile

http://profiles.massmedboard.org/Profiles/MA-Physician-Profile-Find-Doctor.asp

Elder Resources Search

http://www.800ageinfo.com/search/

Find Hunting and Fishing License Vendors

http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/dfwvend.htm

Find a Business Development Site

http://www.massmeansbusiness.com/SF/search.aspx

Mass Visitor Centers

http://www.mass.gov/mhd/resta/location.htm

Office of the Governor

http://www.mass.gov/portal/index.jsp?pageID=gov2homepage&L=1&L0=Home&sid=Agov2

Senators and Representatives by City and Town

http://www.mass.gov/legis/citytown.htm

Federal Representative's Websites

Senator Edward Kennedy

http://kennedy.senate.gov/

Senator John Kerry

http://kerry.senate.gov/bandwidth/home.html

Representative Michael Capuano

http://www.house.gov/capuano/

Representative Bill Delahunt

http://www.house.gov/delahunt/

Representative Barney Frank

http://www.house.gov/frank/

Representative Stephen F. Lynch

http://www.house.gov/lynch/

Representative James P. McGovern

http://www.house.gov/mcgovern/

Representative Ed Markey

http://www.house.gov/markey/

Representative Marty Meehan

http://www.house.gov/meehan/

Representative Richard E. Neal

http://www.house.gov/neal/

Representative John Olver

http://www.house.gov/olver/

Representative John Tierney

http://www.house.gov/tierney/

Tourism & Business Websites

Register a business

https://wfb.dor.state.ma.us/webfile/Business/Public/Webforms/Login/Login.aspx

Occupational and Business Licenses

http://www.mass.gov/portal/index.jsp?pageID=mg2subtopic&L=4&L0=Home&L1=Business&L2=Licensing%2c+Permitting+%26+Regulation&L3=Occupational+%26+business+licenses&sid=massgov2

Corporate Filings

http://www.sec.state.ma.us/cor/functionality/file.htm

File Business Taxes

https://wfb.dor.state.ma.us/webfile/Business/Public/Webforms/Login/Login.aspx

Online Lodging Reservations

http://massvacation.worldres.com/script/node.asp?&cat=49&level=2&g=g&region=empty&org_id=empty

Order a Gateway Catalog (Visitor's Guide)

http://www.massvacation.com/jsp/page.jsp?cat=79

Tool - Breakdown of Mass.gov Home Page

Home Page Return	Intentions Categories	

Chief Elected / Appointed	Most Popular Online Services	Search
Feature (Threat Advisory)		Feature (Survey)
Org Chart Navigation		News and Updates
	Welcome Text / Monthly Featured Information	Find Information
		Feature (Budget)
		Feature (News Service)
Feature (Track Issues)		Calendar
		Feature (Lottery)

Footer

Tool - Guide to Creating the Intentions List

To create master list of citizen intentions, review each data source and complete the sentence beginning with, "User wants to…" In the Marlborough project, a bullet-pointed list was compiled:

User wants to...

- View latest news & events, new flashes, official public notices
- Utilize a keyword search
- View meeting agendas / approved, summarized meeting minutes
- Stay informed of recreational events
- Acquire a dump sticker
- Etc.

Copy and sort the Intended Audience column in the Inventory Spreadsheet to produce a list of non-duplicate audience types. Think about the different personas that each of these audience members could exhibit. In other words, think about age, profession, familiarity with city/town hall services, etc. and ask why is this person seeking what they are seeking?

cr

In the Marlborough project, five user types were defined which exhibited thirteen user personas. As seen in the Appendix I-V, the five user types were: Residents, Businesses, Newcomers, Visitors/Tourists and Non-Resident Taxpayers. The thirteen personas were defined by adopting a naming convention that reflected the citizen's intentions:

1. Carl Contact
2. Abby About
3. Steve Service
4. Mike Meetings
5. Nicky News
6. Reggie Recreation
7. Maggie Maps
8. Bobby Building
9. Neal Newbusiness
10. Ron Runabusiness
11. Carla Customer
12. H.R. Relations
13. Tammy Translation

Tool - Guide to Creating User Profiles

This exercise, while simple, is necessary to define user profiles. The format for user profiles includes the profile, a user summary, a list of relevant intentions, citizen requirements and citizen action steps (to meet these needs).

An example user profile for Nicky News follows:

NICKY NEWS

User summary: Nicky is a citizen who prefers to keep abreast of all the latest city news and announcements and she requires a quick, easy way to view all this information. Nicky occasionally cannot find the time to check the latest postings on such a Bulletin Board, and requires an email subscription service so that news or announcements of interest are sent directly to her inbox.

Nicky wants to:

View news and announcements on a bulletin board – ongoing city projects, job openings, emergency notifications and bids (with an email subscription service)

In order to do this, Nicky needs to:

Locate the official city government Bulletin Board, including links to news and announcements of interest, with information categorized such that future events of interest can be emailed directly to her inbox.

User Intention Task Flows:

        To go one step further when analyzing user profiles, it is recommended that you create user intention task flows. This means creating a simple diagram in PowerPoint or Visio which describes how Nicky News obtains the information and services she is seeking. This exercise goes one step further to mirroring what actually should appear on a website.

cr

To do this, use basic figures to describe web pages, content and links:
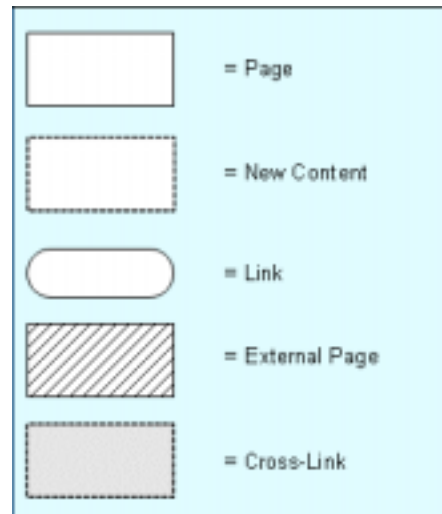
Then, create a task flow by answering the "Nicky wants to" from the user profile. Here, Nicky is labeled as 1.5,

User Intention Task Flow: Nicky News
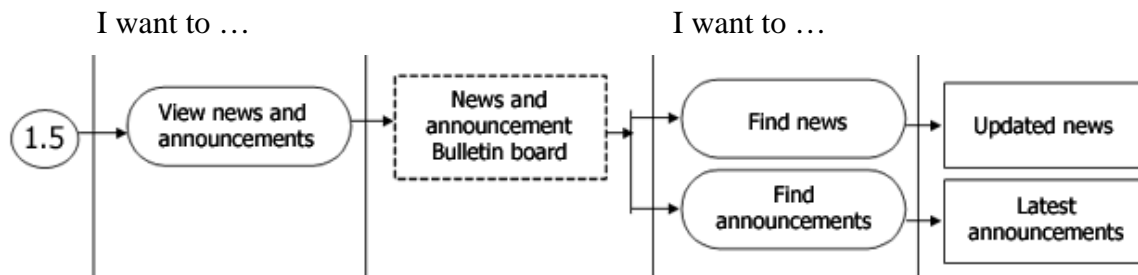
Sub-intentions will correspond to content requirements 2 - 4 clicks into the website. Recent web usability studies confirm users don't mind extra clicks as long as each click takes them closer to their desired content

A subtle, but important distinction to make when creating task flows is that of intentions and *sub-intentions*. Sub-intentions are more granular, specific intentions that present themselves after Nicky News satisfies her primary intention. Creating task flows is also helpful to refine your list of intentions and personas.

Tool - Architecture Worksheet

You have a list of intentions. You have user profiles. To build your information architecture you can work from either of two directions and achieve the same result:

Number 1: Start with intentions. Create a spreadsheet where you list the intention, and ask the question, "**What piece (or pieces) of content do I need in order to satisfy a particular user intention**?"

To answer this question, list the user profile this intention relates to and the corresponding TLC. Going left → right in the spreadsheet, notice you start at the intention-level, identify the upper levels, and list the content requirements.

ID	Intention	User Profile	TLC	Content requirements:	File Format	Owner	Notes/Issues	External Links
1.1	Request a Copy of a Birth Certificate	Steve Service	Residents	Birth Certificate request form	HTML	City Clerk	Same form as death / birth certificate	

Number 2: Start with Appendix B. Model your hierarchy in the same way as the Marlborough navigation scheme. Customize this framework to your community by copying, adding and deleting the appropriate content requirements.

Because this information architecture gives you a head-start with a completed navigation scheme, you may find it easier to plug in content which satisfies each intention. *However*, you must remember to detail your precise content requirements at Level 4. That is, you will also need to create a spreadsheet where you list levels 0-4, going left → right, with:

Level (0-1)	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Content requirements:	File Format	Owner	Notes / Issues	External Links	Intention	User Profile	TLC
1.1	Family and Housing										
	1.1.1	Family									
		1.1.1.1	Adoption and Foster Care								
			How to Adopt - Are you ready?	HTML	Human Services			http://www.mass.gov/dss	Find information on adoption	Abby About	Residents
			Adoption application	PDF	Human Services				Apply for adoption	Steve Service	Residents

What you must add

Either approach will attach content to a navigation scheme hierarchy. Even if you select option 1, refer to Appendix B for guidance on how to best distinguish between levels.
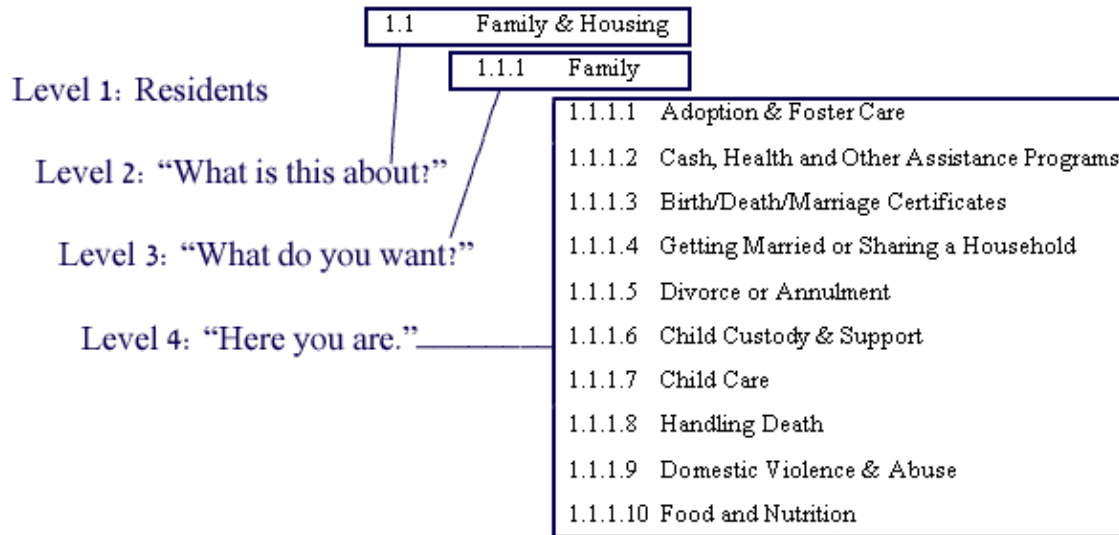
This process is called *repurposing* existing content. For example, within this architecture, the same parking ticket information should be presented to the citizen on the Parking Clerk's department page *and* any time parking ticket contestation is mentioned on the Police Department's page. Content does not *have a purpose* unless the website visitor can find it in an intuitive way.

TOOL - TESTING INSTRUCTIONS

Thank you for participating in User Acceptance Testing of the municipal website. This test script assumes you are trained to maintain the website.

This testing consists of two phases: First, specific task scenarios and, second, free-form testing of the website The first phase is to confirm that authorized users can perform the needed maintenance functions to keep the website up-to-date. The second phase tests that the website functions as it should.

Structured Testing

Please complete the following test script by performing each action and then verifying that the expected results occur.

When the test **PASSES**:

- ✓ Type a 'P' in the Pass column
- ✓ Continue on to perform the next test

When the test **FAILS**:

- ✓ Type a 'F' in the Pass column
- ✓ Verify that the incident is not included on the Known Issues list
- ✓ Enter the actual results in the "If Fails, Actual Results" column.

Free-Form Testing

After you have completed the structured testing, you are free to test any areas that may not have been included in the structured test script. In any instance where a possible issue is encountered, please add the incident to the form at the end of the document.

Here are some things you should and should not report in free-form testing:

In Scope**:**

- **Functionality:** Does performing a specific action lead to the result you expected?

- **Performance:** Significantly noticeable delays in response time or undecipherable error messages.

Out of Scope**:**

- Screen **look & feel** (colors, fonts, display, screen layout, etc.)

Structured Testing Scenario Example

Scenario 7: Create A Document And Post It To The Website

User creates a routine document, like meeting minutes, which is posted to a document folder. City Council Minutes are used in this test scenario.

Step #	User Action (Inputs)	Expected Results	Pass	If Fail, Actual Results
1	On the VTH desktop, double-click on the Mailbox icon.	The mailbox opens.		
2	Double-Click on the Post Council Minutes Icon.	An Email Message form appears; with a **Subject:** of "City Council Minutes mm/dd/yyyy" and a **To**: of "MarlboroughMA_CouncilMin"		
3	Copy meeting minutes text from the source word processing document and paste them into the text area of the VTH email message form.	Minutes appear in the text area.		
4	Change the date in the subject line from mm/dd/yyyy to the appropriate date.	Date is changed.		
5	Click the Send and Close icon.	The email message closes.		
6	Open a web browser and go to Marlborough-ma.gov. Click the City Council Minutes link.	The minutes page opens, with the newest minutes listed at the top of the table.		
7	Click on the minutes you posted.	The document opens and the minutes you pasted are visible.		

RESULTS OF FREE-FORM TESTING OF WEBSITE

Users tests for broken links and missing graphics. NOTE: Sometimes a missing graphic is caused by a browser interruption. Hitting the Refresh button may load it properly.

User Action (Inputs)	Results
The Web Coordinator should open the Home page and check all links.	
The Web Coordinator should check that all graphics load on the header and footer.	
The Web Coordinator should check the links on the "intentions" pages, meaning any page except the various department Home pages or a department's subsidiary pages.	
Each department should check email links on department pages.	
Each department should check all links on their department's subsidiary pages.	

Tool - Sample Home Page Text

Welcome to the Official Web site for the Town of Belmont, Massachusetts. We have provided this site as a service to our residents, businesses, and visitors. If you can't find what you were looking for, have any suggestions for information on this site, or just want to ask us a question, use our comment form.

Welcome to the Town of Dighton's Official Website. The purpose of this website is to provide our residents with useful information and services that will make town government more accessible and to provide visitors and businesses an insight into our town. Our goal is to keep the information updated and to add more information and services as the site progresses.

Welcome to the official website for the Town of Georgetown. For residents and visitors alike, we hope that you will find the site useful and user friendly. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any comments or suggestions as to how we can make the site even better. We will be updating many areas of the website on a frequent basis, so please visit us regularly.

Welcome to the official Web site for the Town of Kingston, Massachusetts. We hope that you will find this site a useful guide to Kingston's government, services, and community organizations. Kingston, incorporated in 1726 and once part of the Plymouth colony, is located 32 miles southeast of Boston. major roads that pass through Kingston include Mass. Route 3, Mass. Route 3a, Mass. Route 27, Mass. Route 80, and Mass. Route 106.

Welcome to the Official Web Site for Lakeville, Massachusetts.
The goal of this website is to provide residents with basic information on Town government, forms and applications for licenses, information on monthly meetings and news/public announcements. We welcome any comments or suggestions that residents might have.

We are a small but vibrant New England town nestled in the heart of the Berkshires of Western Massachusetts. Our rural beauty and major cultural attractions, including Tanglewood, the summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Shakespeare and Company's new international campus, and Edith Wharton's restored mansion, The Mount, attract thousands annually.

Despite our strong tourist attractions and our array of accommodations, we remain primarily a residential community of approximately 6000 people. We gather at the Annual Town Meeting to debate the town and school budgets and to elect our five Selectmen who oversee municipal services. We take pride in our local schools and our friendly small-town character.

This site is designed to help inform you of municipal operations, to keep citizens abreast of municipal management, and to make our town services more accessible. We hope you find the information helpful. Please let us know what additional information you would like to see posted.

Tool - Call Log   **Department:**

Date	Call √	Walk-in √	Topic	Website Now?		Put on Website?	
				Yes	No	Yes	No

Promoting Your Web site

• Where to Include Your URL (Web Address)

• Using Press Releases to Obtain Media Coverage

• Sample Press Releases.

• Using Community Access Television to Promote Your Website

      o What is Community Access Television
      o Community Television Interviews
      o Using the Community Bulletin Board
      o Sample Text for a Community Bulletin Board Message
      o Some Hints to Make Your Television Interview More Successful
      o Sample Interview Questions for Media Interviews

• Sample Text: Direct Mail Piece.

• Sample Text: Employee Paycheck Stuffers.

• Sample Text: Utility Bill Stuffer

• Copy for public posting and suggestions for posting locations.

Where to Include Your URL (Web Address)

Get in the habit of including your URL on everything that the public sees. Some critical places include:

• Letterhead
• Business Cards
• Meeting Agenda and Minutes
• All Public Notices
• Brochures
• Employee Recruitment Ads
• Event Fliers

Until things like letterhead are reprinted, consider establishing a policy that employees include the URL in all public correspondence.

Sample Text: Direct Mail Piece

DON'T PANIC IF YOU CAN'T MAKE IT TO TOWN HALL BY 5:00!
(Town Name)'s Town Hall is Open 24 Hours a Day, Seven Days a Week.
(Town Name) is proud to announce its new web site (or, new and improved web site, for towns with a previously-existing site).

www.ourtown.com is your direct connection to:

√   Calendars of town meetings and events

√   Committee and board meeting minutes and agenda

√   Public discussion forums

√   Information about town departments

√   Park, recreation, and adult education program information

√   Zoning requests, licenses, and permits

√   E-mail subscriber list which informs residents of important town news as it happens

√   Answers to frequently answered questions

Of course, you may still conduct town business by visiting us in person or by telephone. For more information about the many exciting features of our new web site, visit our site at: www.ourtown-st.gov, or contact (person) at (email address) or by calling (telephone number).

Sample Release

SIMSBURY, CT. OFFERS ONLINE TOWN HALL SERVICE

SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT, November 15, 2000 – Citizens in Simsbury, Connecticut no longer have to attend planning board meetings or school committee meetings to find out what is going on in town. By visiting the new site, www.townofsimsbury.com, residents can now obtain general information on local government, town meeting minutes and agenda, and community events and services.

The town of Simsbury, with a population of approximately 23,000 residents, maintains the traditional New England town meeting form of government. Therefore, says Anita Mielert, First Selectman for the town, keeping citizens informed and educated on a wide variety of issues is important. "One of my main policy initiatives is to preserve an open government forum," she said. "The website allows me to do that. The e-mail subscriber feature allows me to mail residents public notices online—and without charge. This increases the public's access to local government information tremendously."

Ms. Mielert publicly announced the fully operational web site on Monday, November 13th at the First Selectman's meeting. Prior to installation of the new services, municipal web site access was available only under the state's web site, which fell under state domain.

"Not only has subscribing to Big Internet Company made the transition to our own domain name seamless, but now we have the technology and supervisory authority over the content and updates of our own web site," said Rick Bazzano, data processing manager for the town. "In the near future, line departments such as police, building, library, school, and community planning and development departments will be able to update information and maintain direct input to the public on a daily basis."

Although the site has just been launched, the information currently available online for town residents is just the beginning. Meilert says she has received many requests for tourism information. She plans to add digitized photos and drawings of buildings and events such as the skating center and the Hartford Symphony Orchestra's summer fest to the web site.

#
Contact: Randy Perry, Big Internet Company, 111-111-1111

Using Community Television to Promote Your Website

What is Community Access Television?
Many towns have a local community access channel that is used to provide information to the public. Members of the community produce at least some of the programming and many stations have interview-format programs that focus on issues of interest to the community. In addition, many community access channels will post messages to a community bulletin board, which is a scrolling text message.

Community Television Interviews
If your town has community access TV, give the studio a call to find out which program(s) would be most appropriate for a discussion about the town's new web capabilities.

1. Ask how to schedule airtime for an interview and whether you can prepare a list of questions for the interviewer. We've attached a list of some sample questions that you may use. Of course, you may wish to add additional questions that relate more specifically to your city or town.

2. Find out how long the interview will last. This will help you prepare an appropriate number of questions. Remember, it is better to have too many questions than not enough.

3. Arrange to have the mayor, town manager, information technologies manager, or other appropriate official attend the interview to discuss how the town's new web site will enhance the public's ability to access town information and services.

4. Finally, ask the station to keep a graphic up on the screen with your URL (web address) during the interview and ask the interviewer to repeat the URL frequently throughout the show (for example: "Again, we are talking about (the town)'s new web site, which can be accessed at www.yourtown.com.").

Using the Community Bulletin Board
In addition to doing an interview, consider sending text for a scrolling screen announcement on the station's community bulletin board. To be most effective, try to keep the message to no more than 8-10 lines when publicizing your website. Long messages will lose the readers attention. When you contact the station, ask how much time the staff needs for placement and how they would like to receive this information—via e-mail, fax, or regular mail.

Below is a sample text message that you may use to help promote your new website.

Sample Text for a Community Bulletin Board Message
(Town name) citizens: Now you can be kept up to date on town government news, local events, and committee and board meetings and agenda by logging onto the community web site at:

http://www.ourtown.com

Information is updated daily.

Some Hints to Make Your Television Interview More Successful

• Don't drink milk or eat other dairy products before an interview. It makes your saliva thicker, which can cause you to make smacking noises when you talk.

• Stay away from that fabulous new suit jacket, blouse, shirt, or tie with a very small checkered pattern or stripes. Small checks or stripes can cause something called a moiré effect, which comes across on television like the pattern is jumping around.

• If you wear makeup, you may want to wear slightly more than usual, but don't overdo it.

• If the interviewer fails to ask you about something you consider important, don't be afraid to interject. A good way to do that is to say something like "I'd also like to add one thing, if that's O.K. I think it's important to tell people that…"

• Finally, here are a few ways to avoid rambling:

       o Finish each idea before proceeding.

       o Tolerate silence.

       o Shorten your sentences.

       o Picture your idea in your mind, as if on "video," before speaking, or picture your words on a screen in your mind before you say them.

       o Put the most important information at the beginning or end of your sentences.

       o Slow down by as much as 70% to allow more time to think.

Sample Interview Questions for Media Interviews

1. Tell me about (the town)'s new web site. What are some of the most significant features?
(*This is a good place to give a general list of features. Have the interviewer ask to hear more about some of the key features of your site in a different question.)

2. It seems that a lot of towns have web sites today, but that many of those mostly provide static information like directions or general information about the town. How is this virtual town hall different?
(* Static sites aren't really very helpful for residents of a town or city – they already know where the schools are and what the clerk's office does. What residents need is current information about what is happening in the town. On our site, information updated daily/weekly. Our virtual town hall contains current information that is pertinent to residents and visitors alike. For example…)

3. Why did (the town) decide to have a presence on the web?
(*Times are changing; there is an expectation by the public that they can get information on the web. Not everyone can get to town/city hall by 5:00; site allows busy people to get information, take care of town/city business 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; etc.)

4. Not everyone is familiar with the Internet. Can you explain what a web site is and how people access it?

5. So, tell me again: what is (the town)'s URL, or web address?

6. What are the benefits of putting information on the town's web site?
(*24 hour availability, residents can quickly learn about upcoming town events, view a meeting agenda, obtain information about recreation department offerings, or find out what happened at a meeting they were unable to attend.)

7. What if someone doesn't have a computer with Internet access at home? Are there other ways to get online?
(*This questions is a good one if residents can get online at the library, etc.)

8. (The town) has had a web site for some time already. What is different about the site now?
(*If applicable)

9. Tell me a little bit more about (a particular feature of the site).

10. So, how does information actually get put on the site? Can you tell me a little bit about that?

11. Are there cost benefits to having a web site like this?

(*Yes. Because so much current information is now available on the site, town employees can spend less time on the telephone answering basic questions and more time doing other important work. This keeps our staffing costs down. In addition, because each department can post its own information, we don't have to hire a dedicated team of people to just gather and program information, as was required in the past. Cost is important, and we think this is a great investment. But the most important thing is that our new site will allow us to serve the public better and faster than ever before.)

12. **What if someone doesn't want to or can't use the web site?**
(* Site doesn't replace other ways of getting information, only supplements those as one more way to provide information to citizens in a way that is convenient for them.)

13. **What if I know I want to keep up with a particular department or committee? Let's say I always want to know what happened at the school committee meeting, or I have a child and want to keep track of what is being offered by the recreation department. Is there a way to get that information without always having to log on and check for it?**
(*If applicable: Yes. People can sign up to receive emails from a particular department or committee about current events, meeting minutes and agenda, etc. It's easy to do. They just…)

14. **So, lets review some of the things that can be done on (the town)'s new web site. First of all, the address is: www.yourtown.com. And some of the things that are available, again, are…**

Hint: If you write additional questions, be sure to steer clear of closed-ended questions – that is, questions that can be answered with a yes or no or one-word answer. Instead, choose open-ended questions, which are those that solicit a longer, more detailed response. Remember, the idea is for the person being interviewed to do most of the talking – not the person conducting the interview.

Employee Participation

Many town employees think that adding a Web site is only going to add to their workload. If they have had experience with other Web site (or with your older Web site) they are usually justified in their opinion. As recently as 1998 only 25% of the US population was connected to the Internet. Today that average exceeds 50%. And many of our customers report that the usage is in excess of 80% in households with school children. Today, many of your residents have done research on the Internet and have even purchased books from Amazon.com, or airline tickets through Travelocity.

Big Internet Company has designed a service that allows the originator of any public document to **copy** the text from the word processing document, **paste** it into an e-mail form and **post** it to your Web site. In effect, it will take less time that it would for your staff to find the original document, make a photocopy and hand it to a resident across the counter. If one resident gets the information from your Web site rather than from your staff, your staff will have a net gain in time and effort. If you have Internet connectivity in your office, and your staff is familiar with your Web site, they can even use it to retrieve and print documents, rather than copy the originals.

To make it even more effective a built in search engine will find public documents that contain a word or words entered in a search query faster than your staff could ever find them in your filing cabinet.

At the Counter:
When residents come in to town hall for copies of public notices, agenda or meeting minutes make sure your staff lets them know the information is now available on the Web site.

On the Phone:
When residents call for copies of public notices, agenda or meeting minutes to be faxed, make sure your staff lets them know the information is now available on the Web site.

Copy Charges:
If you regularly charge copy costs for public documents, make sure your residents know they can print the documents from your Web site on their home or office printer at no charge.

Sample Text: Employee Paycheck Stuffer
Did you know?
[Town's name] town hall is going virtual. As of (date), (town name) will be able to bring the latest information to town residents via the World Wide Web. With our new website capabilities, residents will be able to access the following features:

> ➢ Calendars of town events
> ➢ Committee and board meeting minutes and agenda
> ➢ Public discussion forums

- Information about town departments
- Park, recreation, and adult education program information
- Zoning requests, licenses, and permits
- E-mail subscriber list which informs residents of important town news as it happens
- Answers to frequently answered questions

Of course, residents may still conduct town business by visiting us in person or by telephone. For more information about the many exciting features of our new web site, contact (person) at (email address) or by calling (telephone number).

Please take a moment to visit our website at www.ourtown.com

How Do You Fit In?
- Familiarize yourself with the site's capabilities. The more you know about what it can do, the more you will be able to utilize it to serve the public.
- Include our URL (web address) in all public correspondence.
- Help spread the word. Be sure to let the public know about our site and how to use it to their advantage.
- If you produce meeting minutes or agenda, public notices, or other information that may be helpful for residents of our town, or if you help coordinate activities or events that are open to the public, talk to your department head about posting that information to the web site.
- Visit our site regularly and let us know if you particularly like a feature, or if you
have any ideas for improvement. It is our goal to have the best and most useful site around.